WHY DID BLACKWATER'S HIRED GUNS DIE IN FALLUJA?

The Nation.

CHALLENGING PRO-BUSH DEMOCRATS
John Nichols

VETS IN THE PEACE MOVEMENT
Christian Parenti

THE ISRAEL DIVESTMENT DEBATE
Hasdai Westbrook

WALTER MOSLEY'S L.A. NOIR
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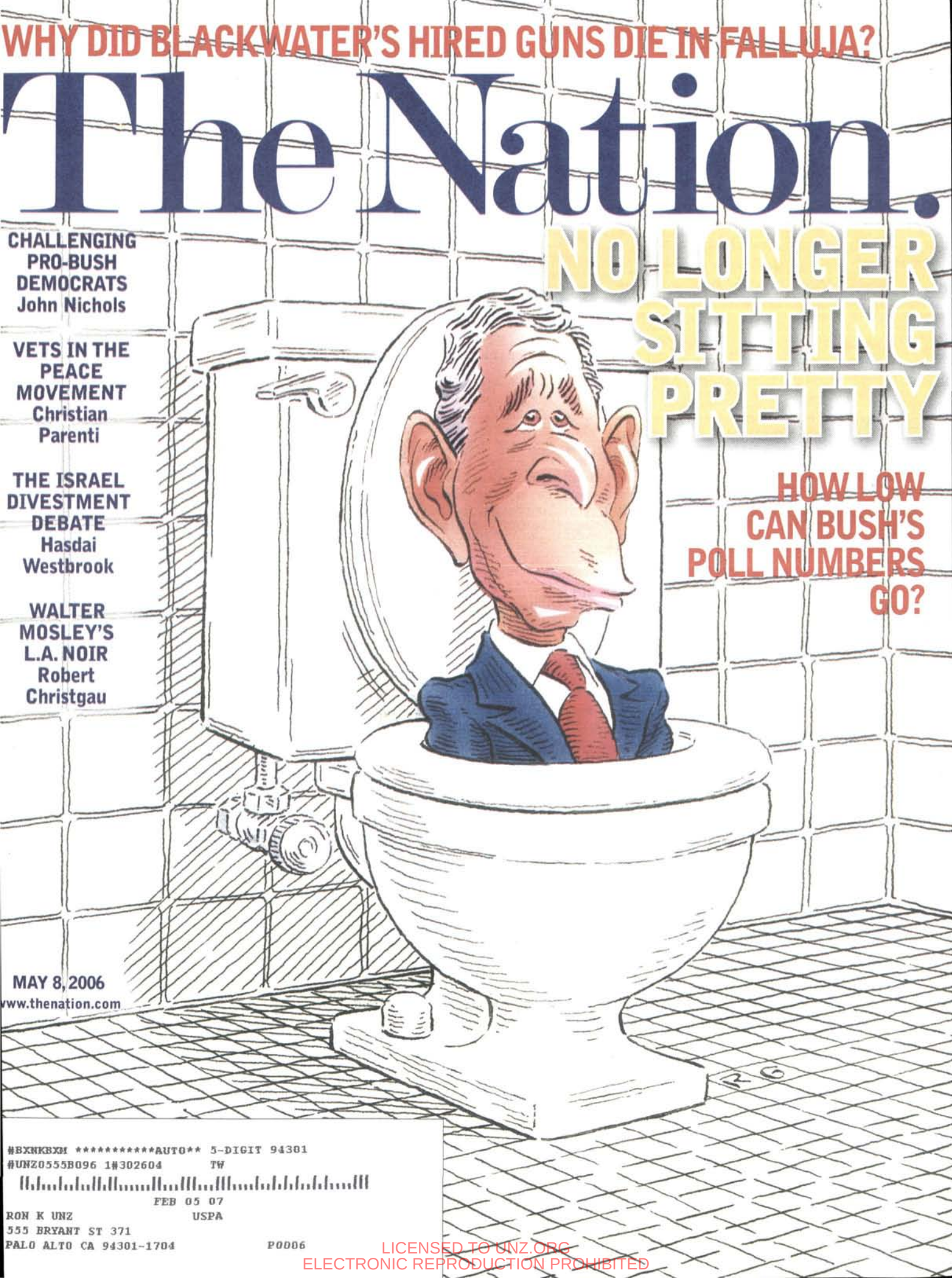
NO LONGER SITTING PRETTY

HOW LOW CAN BUSH'S POLL NUMBERS GO?



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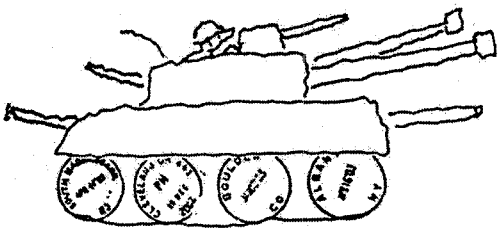

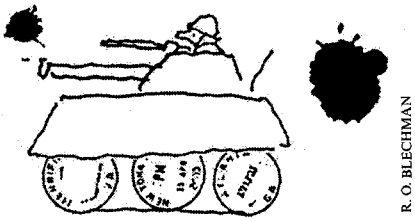

R. O. BLECHMAN

HELEN THOMAS, HELEN THOMAS

Washington press corps veteran Helen Thomas's March 27 "Lap Dogs of the Press" drew a sustained and heartfelt outpouring from our readers. Below is a sample. —*The Editors*

Nashville
■ Helen Thomas rocks! The rest of you—get rolling! DENNY SAROKIN

Healdsburg, Calif.
■ God bless Helen Thomas for telling the unvarnished truth about the MSM. MARTIN WEIL

Buffalo, Minn.
■ How can we teach more journalists to be like Helen Thomas?????? DIANE KJELLBERG

New York City
■ Hire Helen Thomas! MCEVOY CAMPBELL

Hemet, Calif.
■ Bless you, Helen. Sock it to 'em. You go, girl. DONALD GARWOOD

Washington, DC
■ My friend Helen Thomas takes the Washington press corps to task for failing to be more skeptical in the run-up to the war in Iraq. She has a good point as far as it goes, but a few reporters—Seymour Hersh of *The New Yorker*, Walter Pincus of the *Washington Post* and Knight Ridder—did challenge the Bush Administration's case for the war.

Starting in 2002, John Walcott, Jonathan Landay and Warren Strobel of Knight Ridder began reporting that many intelligence and military professionals didn't believe that Saddam Hussein posed an increased security threat to the United States and said that intelligence was being manipulated to support the arguments for invading Iraq. In more than sixty stories through 2002 and '03, Knight Ridder reported that information provided by Iraqi defectors was bogus, that evidence for Saddam's supposed nuclear weapons program was inconclusive and that the Pentagon failed to plan for the postwar reality that now confronts US troops in Iraq.

The daily briefings in the White House press room almost never shed light on what's really going on in this Administration. It takes old-fashioned reporting, away from the TV lights—and from message minders whose interest is not in honestly informing the public. CLARK HOYT
Washington editor, Knight Ridder

Punta Gorda, Fla.
■ I worship the work of Helen Thomas and wish there were more reporters like her. However, my recollections differ on coverage by the *New York Times* leading up to the invasion of Iraq. Two prewar articles I recall warned extensively of possible dire outcomes, including civil war, disruption of oil supplies and the prospect that conflict would spread. A front-page *Times* piece, months before the invasion and by a reporter who had spent many weeks in Iraq, alerted me for the first time to the notion that while most Iraqis hated Saddam, they hated Americans more. I also recall that in the months after the invasion, the *Times* was accused by some on the right of having an antiwar bias. JACK THOMAS

Oulu, Finland
■ Way back in the early 1950s, I learned my basic journalism when I was less than 10 years old, in the arms and at the feet of my grandfather, the late K.C. Mammen Mappillai. "Lap Dogs of the Press" took me back to the days when he and many other journalists had to spend time in jail for supporting the Indian National Congress and the Freedom Movement in India. The fearless small newspaper editors and their journalists, like my grandfather, had to undergo much hardship to educate their readers. Without them, the messages of the freedom fighters would never have been heard. Thank you for this article, which raises the issue of how our journalists practice journalism. Let us hope that a few like Helen Thomas are produced in the years to come! JACOB MATTHAN

Taylors, SC
■ Helen Thomas is one of my media heroes. I lost my job as the co-host of a popular morning radio show at a Clear Channel station because I spoke out against this war and the Administration. I agree wholeheartedly with Helen Thomas when she calls the media lap dogs. All the major media outlets, including the *New York Times*, rolled over and played dead, repeating every lie, half-truth and fabrication the White House fed them. I am haunted by the thought that if the media had connected the dots, the public and our elected officials might have risen up against the war. ROXANNE WALKER CORDONIER

Waban, Mass.
■ In these troubled times, Helen Thomas offers clarity and, with it, hope. May others stand up to defend our Constitution and for truth. Thank you, Ms. Thomas.
TESS WISHENGRAD SIEGEL

THOMAS REPLIES

Washington, DC
■ I am very grateful for the many kind words in response to the publication of excerpts from my forthcoming book, *Watchdogs of Democracy?* Although I am highly critical of the performance of the White House press corps in the crucial period of the run-up to the invasion of Iraq—and the lack of skepticism in particular—I did not mean to tar all reporters with the same brush. I know all too well the opposition to the war posed by *The Nation*'s columnists; the dubious articles in the Knight Ridder newspapers; the reports by Seymour Hersh, Robert Fisk, Walter Pincus and Robert Scheer, among others.

But those reporters on hand for the daily spin were mute and, I believe, defaulted on their self-appointed role to protect the American people's right to know almost everything that is done in their name. Presidents, government officials and lawmakers are public servants, and they should be questioned early and often and held accountable. Justice Louis Brandeis said that "a constant spotlight on public officials lessens the possibility of corruption." I believe that. He also said that "if the government becomes a lawbreaker, it breeds contempt for the law." I believe that, too. HELEN THOMAS

EPISTEMOLOGY OF SEMIOTICS & *WHAT?*

San Diego
■ During the ten-plus years since I left full-time academia, I have struggled for words to express the fatuousness, dishonesty and *faux*-leftist posturing of that milieu. As a lit-theory person at an Ivy, I was appalled by the peculiar combination of self-congratulation and self-delusion among so many colleagues who interrogated power and hegemony in their work while blindly practicing it in the pettiest institutional practices. Russell Jacoby's brilliant review ["Brother From Another Planet," April 10] had me in stitches for its pinpoint accuracy, and reinspired me to ponder the role of the leftist intellectual beyond elitist name-dropping, obscurantism and ridiculous pretenses that our rarefied radical publications have any real social effects on the world.

Some years ago I gave a talk at the MLA on the institutional incongruity of "radical Shakespeare studies." A professor warned me that this was a dangerous paper to present, but I was heedless and young. I had a dreadful cold and delivered my paper amid sniffles and suppressed sneezes. A scholar I very much respected praised me for being so "brave." Hurray, someone got it! I thought, only to have the scholar go on to tell me how courageous I was for presenting my paper despite an obvious head cold.

Dear Professor Jacoby—they don't, and won't, get it. But thank you for your heroic efforts. Keep on raging against the machine.
KARIN S. CODDON

Charlottesville, Va
■ Russell Jacoby: tin ear, Paul Piccone wannabe, professional cynic. His review of my *Disappearing Liberal Intellectual* was kind of funny, and he had me laughing. The laugh's on him, though, because his "witticisms" are so corny, his sarcasm so ham-fisted, his cuts so cheap and his anti-academicism so willed that he winds up shadow-boxing with an invented author. His "critique" boils down to calling me a professor. I know you are, Russ (history, UCLA), but what am I?

(Continued on Page 30)

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EDITORIALS

No Longer Sitting Pretty

Two years and nine months to go. How much more can George W. Bush take? More important, how much more can *we*?

Bush's approval rating is bottoming out. Retired generals have launched a media coup against his Secretary of Defense. Republican strategists have actually started to consider the unthinkable: Their party could lose control of the House. (That does not yet seem likely, but the consequences are frightening for GOPers: Congressional investigations and subpoenas.) Bush's best pals in the "coalition of the willing" are not faring well: Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi was defeated in Italy, and British Prime Minister Tony Blair is once again on the ropes. The war in Iraq continues to get uglier—perhaps morphing into intractable sectarian conflict—and progress on the political front there seems elusive. And let's not forget, no WMDs have been found.

Worse (for Bush), it seems that every few days there's another news story—some related to the prosecution of accused liar Scooter Libby—that reminds the public that Bush's primary case for the now unpopular war was based on bunk and that he overstated that bunk. A coming-to-an-end (or a chickens-coming-home?) feeling has enveloped the Bush White House that no staff shuffle can puncture. (Will the American people cry, "Hooray! There's a new press secretary and Karl Rove has a different job title"?)

Bush's approval ratings in recent polls have dropped into the mid-30s—twenty to thirty points lower than Bill Clinton's ratings during his tawdry Monica scandal. Bush may say he doesn't care about the polls, but other Republicans do, fearing that Bush has become a pair of concrete shoes for Congressional candidates running in November—some of whom are running away from joint appearances with Bush. Accompanying Bush's decline is a drop in Republicans' overall numbers. A recent *Washington Post*/ABC News poll found that registered voters favor a House Democratic candidate over a Republican by 55 to 40 percent—the biggest Democratic edge since the mid-1980s. Given the gerrymandering of House districts and the GOP's ability to raise a tremendous amount of money and to demagogue Democrats on national security issues, Republicans don't need to panic yet. But any party would rather be swimming with the current than staring at an incoming wave. The only good news for Bush, poll-wise, is that he's ahead of Dick Cheney.

The retired generals' revolt has raised questions about the Commander in Chief, such as: How come he's the last person in the room to know the war is going poorly and that the guy he picked to run it has screwed up royally? The White House had Bush speak out in defense of Rumsfeld, but did they really believe the public would take the word of a onetime MIA National Guardsman over that of the generals—especially when Bush's credibility, because of those missing weapons of mass destruction, is shot? Bush and his White House tacticians don't seem to get it: It doesn't matter what he says anymore. He's delivered a series of we're-making-progress speeches to rally support for the war, but there has been no discernible impact on the public's attitude. He's busted in the rhetoric department. Reality, for the moment, has trumped his spin.

There's still plenty of time for him to make things worse (see Iran). But the Rumsfeld imbroglio is a pointed reminder that this is a man stuck too much within himself and his world of distortion. And relying on false or disingenuous assertions is not working for him the way it once did. So finally—years too late—he is paying a price. Alas, so is the rest of the world.

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COMMENT

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No to Prowar Democrats

When Los Angeles teacher Marcy Winograd saw her Democratic representative in Congress making excuses for George W. Bush's warrantless wiretapping program on NBC's *Meet the Press* in February, she decided that someone had to challenge Jane Harman's acquiescence in Bush's reckless agenda. So Winograd, a veteran activist who had been instrumental in getting the California Democratic Party to take a firm stand against the war in Iraq, leapt into the June 6 primary. She quickly found that others shared her frustration with Harman; Winograd's been endorsed by Progressive Democrats of America, Southern California Americans for Democratic Action, the Western Region of the United Auto Workers union and a half-dozen presidents of local Democratic clubs. Recently her supporters blocked an early Harman endorsement by the state party after Winograd told a caucus: "When elected, I will have the courage to cut funding for the war in Iraq, to say no when the imperial George Bush wants to wiretap your home without a warrant and to immediately sign on to legislation for universal single-payer national healthcare."

Winograd is one of a growing number of challengers to Democratic House and Senate incumbents accused of being too supportive of the war in particular, and of the Bush Administration in general. Not since the early 1970s, when anti–Vietnam War insurgents like Ron Dellums in California, Father Robert Drinan in Massachusetts and Elizabeth Holtzman in New York defeated entrenched Democrats in primaries, has there been such ferment over foreign policy within the ranks of the party.

Ironically, a Democrat who helped form the antiwar caucus that in 1970 wrested the US Senate nomination in Connecticut away from a conservative incumbent, Thomas Dodd, was a young lawyer named Joe Lieberman. This year Lieberman, seeking reelection to Dodd's old seat, faces a serious primary challenge from telecommunications executive Ned Lamont, who entered the race after Lieberman emerged as the highest-profile Democratic defender of Bush's "stay the course" line on Iraq. Arguing that Connecticut needs "a Democratic senator," Lamont has attracted more than 7,000 campaign donations (many collected through the Internet, where liberal bloggers are promoting his candidacy) and hundreds of volunteers for a drive to collect 15,000 signatures to secure him a place on the August 8 primary ballot.

The backing that Lieberman enjoys from party leaders, particularly the state's popular senior senator, Chris Dodd, still makes him a favorite for the nomination. But Lamont, with personal wealth to draw on and support from several Connecticut chapters of Democracy for America (DFA), the grassroots organization that grew out of Democratic National Committee chair Howard Dean's 2004 presidential campaign—and a personal endorsement from Dean's younger brother Jim, a Connecticut resident and the national chair of DFA—has shaken Lieberman. After he was booed at a March Democratic Party dinner, the senator, whose approval rating among Connecticut Democrats has dropped seventeen points in the past year, announced he had "not foreclosed the option" of quitting the party that nominated him

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for Vice President in 2000 to seek re-election as an independent.

Lieberman isn't the only Democratic senator facing an antiwar primary challenge. In New York, former National Writers Union president Jonathan Tasini is stepping up his long-shot bid to displace likely 2008 presidential contender Hillary Clinton; elsewhere, antiwar candidates have announced or are weighing primary bids against Democratic senators, including Washington's Maria Cantwell and Wisconsin's Herb Kohl. Challengers are also taking on the candidates of DC Democrats for open House and Senate slots. Ignoring calls for party loyalty, three county Democratic parties in Pennsylvania have refused to back the Democratic Senate Campaign Committee's favored candidate, Bob Casey Jr., over progressive Chuck Pennacchio. In Maryland, former NAACP president Kweisi Mfume, who's made his antiwar stance central to his primary bid for an open Senate seat, is in a dead heat with Representative Ben Cardin, a favorite of party insiders.

The fights reflect a tension between party leaders, who say the best way to capitalize on Bush's declining approval is by uniting behind incumbents and centrist candidates, and activists, who argue that the party needs to nominate antiwar candidates who can articulate the frustration of voters. Even some liberals, like Barbara Boxer, are counseling progressives against backing primary challenges to tepid incumbents. "If we are going to seize this moment, not squander it," says Boxer, "we must focus on the vast number of differences we have with our Republican opponents, not the few we have with each other." In the Harman-Winograd race, Harman is circulating "despite our differences on the current war" endorsement letters from Boxer and Representative Barbara Lee; Winograd reminds grassroots Democrats that, unlike Harman, she'll vote with Boxer and Lee to bring the troops home.

Frustration with the war is such that Harman is now emphasizing her support for an (admittedly vague) "exit strategy"—confirming the view that, win or lose, this year's primary challenges are forcing Democratic incumbents to be more critical of Bush. But that's not good enough for Winograd. She describes her contest with Harman as "an iconic struggle that asks, Who does the Democratic Party represent—grassroots Democrats or the Bush Administration?"

JOHN NICHOLS

Divestment and Sudan

On the morning of October 25, 2004, Harvard roommates Manav Bhatnagar and Ben Collins woke up to some particularly disturbing news in the campus daily, the Harvard *Crimson*. "Harvard has invested millions of dollars in a Chinese oil company whose financial dealings with the Sudanese government, human rights activists say, have funded that regime's ongoing slaughter of its own people," the *Crimson* reported. The roommates sprang into action, sparking what would soon become the largest divestment movement since students helped to topple South Africa's apartheid regime in the 1980s.

Within months, a campuswide coalition of African and African-American student groups, human rights activists and religious organizations had formed to pressure the university into divesting from PetroChina. By April 2005 the demands were met. Samantha Power, author of *"A Problem From Hell"* and a professor at the Kennedy School of Government, said it was "the first week anything tangible has been done that would cause the Sudanese government to think twice about their genocidal campaign."

After Harvard became the first university to divest, successful campaigns at Stanford, Yale, Brown, Amherst, Dartmouth, Brandeis and Samford (in Alabama) followed. In March the University of California system became the first public educational institution to divest. The national Sudan Divestment Task Force has taken the fight beyond university walls to public pension funds: Thus far, New Jersey, Illinois and Oregon have passed divestment legislation; thirteen other states have legislation pending. On April 6 the movement scored its largest victory when the California State Teachers' Retirement System—America's second-largest public pension fund, with $141 billion in assets—voted to divest. Daniel Millenson, executive director of the task force, says his group urges "targeted—rather than blanket—divestment," meaning it focuses on companies that provide revenue or arms to the government and excludes those that provide social services. Nobel winner Joseph Stiglitz, who voted for divestment as a member of Amherst's board of trustees, says the move won't hurt civilians in Sudan. Most divestment efforts have targeted the oil industry, which, he says, does not create jobs and largely finances military operations. "The government does not have a heavy development agenda—it's not as though the government is busy building schools in Darfur," Stiglitz says. "It's a pretty clear case of this money being used against the government's own people."

While no company has pulled out of Sudan, Smith College professor and Sudan expert Eric Reeves says, "This is an explosive campaign, and I think we'll see some major announcements in the coming months." Reeves speaks from experience. In 2001 he was successful in a separate divestment campaign against the Canadian company Talisman Energy, which helped fund the Sudanese government in its twenty-one-year civil war. Many of Canada's largest public and private pension funds divested, causing Talisman's share price to drop by 35 percent, which led to the company's pullout from Sudan. Reeves believes this financial pressure accelerated the signing of the 2003 Comprehensive Peace Agreement with the rebels from the South.

CALVIN TRILLIN

Calls For Rumsfeld's Resignation

The voices panning Rumsfeld now grow strong.
Some say that he should be in charge no longer.
Of course, all leaders have at times been wrong,
But one who's wrong and arrogant seems wronger.

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COMMENT

William Sloane Coffin Jr.

The death of the Rev. William Sloane Coffin Jr. sent out concentric ripples of grief that touched all who care about peace, social justice, civil rights and other causes he so eloquently championed during his busy, engaged life.

Many in the *Nation* community worked with him in these causes, or admired him as an inspirational leader. His public witness began in 1961, when he made a dangerous Freedom Ride in the South. He was heeding the call to lend the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.'s endangered nonviolent movement the legitimacy of a white Presbyterian minister and Yale chaplain with hereditary roots in the WASP establishment. During the Vietnam War, this World War II veteran and former CIA officer again used his celebrity and his powerful preaching to spark the draft resistance movement.

Nation contributor Rabbi Arthur Waskow, who met Coffin in that movement, called him "one of the greatest of our 'prophetic voices.'" Marcus Raskin, a member of the *Nation* editorial board, joined Coffin in the Boston Five, a group of antiwar activists, including Dr. Benjamin Spock, who practiced civil disobedience in solidarity with young Americans and were indicted for conspiring to violate the draft laws. To Raskin, what was striking about Coffin was his "powerful moral core," religiously grounded. "Courage was a major part of his life; he had a kind of nobility," Raskin said. Yet he fondly recalled Coffin's "sunny disposition."

Coffin was indeed a witty man as well as charming, voluble, profane, hyperkinetic, athletic—"a tough guy who could drink hard and face anyone down," as biographer Warren Goldstein writes. Former Attorney General Ramsey Clark, who oversaw the 1968 prosecution of the Boston Five, recalled him as a "wonderfully joyous and loving, optimistic human being." Asked if Coffin had held the prosecution against him, Clark recalled that after he left government Coffin had invited him to speak at Yale, and they became good friends and allies. Clark also said that the case, in which Coffin was found guilty (the conviction was thrown out on appeal), drove home to a passive public the moral issues of the war. As Coffin preached at a Yale commencement: "Oh God, take our minds and think through them, take our lips and speak through them, take our hearts and set them on fire."

Coffin said in an interview that the "sense of self-fulfillment from being in the right fight" was a more profound satisfaction than "mere happiness." He was on the right side of many fights. Early on he seized the nettle of gay rights while pastor at Riverside Church, causing a rift, only partially healed, with conservative black parishioners. He later inspired the antinuke campaign at the helm of SANE/Freeze. He opposed the war in Iraq, calling the years following the invasion "morally and politically disastrous" in a comment in this magazine in January 2004. But ending on a characteristically optimistic note, he praised peace activists and whistleblowers everywhere and argued that "despair is not an option."

Just before Coffin died, Cora Weiss, an old friend who had helped him run the Riverside Church Disarmament Program, read to him over the phone Dan Wakefield's piece on the religious left in our April 24 issue. Wakefield wrote that religious progressives wonder where new leaders of Coffin's caliber will come from. Weiss said she told Coffin, "Bill, you can't go. Dan Wakefield says there's no one to replace you." Coffin replied, "He'll find out soon enough." Bill Coffin is, of course, irreplaceable, but he left some advice to successors. Writing in *The Nation*, he spoke of the "two great biblical mandates: to pursue justice and to seek peace."

—The Editors

The Sudanese government is starting to feel the pressure from the divestment movement. It took out an estimated $1 million in ads in the *New York Times* in March, and the Sudanese embassy recently published a press release decrying divestment efforts. "The fact that the regime is responding so distinctly to the movement means they certainly understand the implications," says Reeves.

While the divestment movement alone likely won't be enough to bring an end to the atrocities in Darfur, it has had a much more tangible effect on the situation than calls for US intervention. In fact, while Bush, in the face of so much pressure from the grassroots, has taken a leading role in calling for an intervention force, NATO and EU nations have been extremely resistant to act, at least partly because they don't want to be associated with a Bush-led venture in the current political climate.

Why have US students responded so strongly to Sudan, when closer-to-home issues like the Iraq War and cuts in financial aid have failed to produce mass movements on campus? "This is the Rwanda generation," says Power. "The foundational moral learning experience for these students was Rwanda—they don't understand how they could have been alive while it happened."

Sam Graham-Felsen

Sam Graham-Felsen reports on youth and campus issues for The Notion blog on The Nation*'s website.*

Ford's Past in Argentina

Buenos Aires

Over *café cortado* in his working-class living room, Pedro Troiani recounts how, thirty years ago, at 9 in the morning, his number came up.

It was April 13, 1976, some three weeks into a bloody dictatorship that would eventually kill an estimated 30,000 Argentines branded as leftist subversives. Troiani, now 64, showed up for work as usual at Ford Motor Company's General Pacheco

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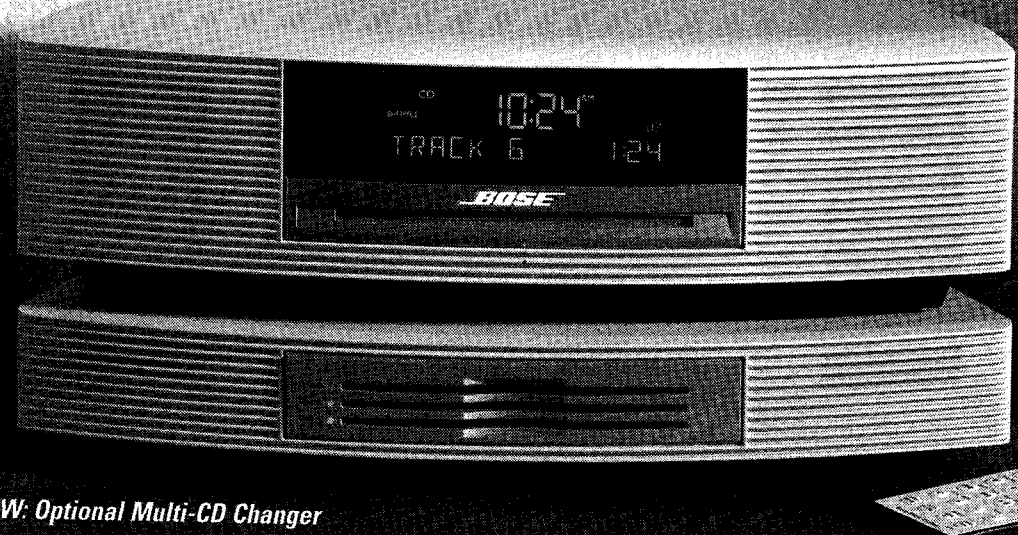

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COMMENT

factory, a 5,000-employee facility near Buenos Aires. Troiani, a labor delegate who often pressed managers for better working conditions, took his place on the factory floor and started painting a new Ford F-100 pickup, the same model his problems drove up in. "I even remember the color of the truck I was painting," he says. "It was white. I looked up and saw the soldiers drive up in a Ford 100. Some others walked along beside it. One of them said to me, 'You are detained.' I asked him to let me get my documents, and he said, 'You won't need them where you are going.'"

The weeks of clandestine detention and torture that followed form part of a new lawsuit here accusing Ford of colluding with Gen. Jorge Rafael Videla's military government to rid itself of labor problems, specifically twenty-five delegates and company employees who were kidnapped by soldiers, tortured and released after days, weeks or months.

The alleged acts are bundled into a criminal complaint seeking the arrests of former company officials and a request that a judge open legal doors to an eventual civil suit against the company. While Mercedes Benz has been questioned for similar acts, it's the first legal process initiated here against a private corporation for its role in the "dirty war." And it paints a violent picture of military-industrial collusion. As Ford churned out vehicles for the regime, a clandestine military detention center operated on factory grounds; military helicopters moved factory equipment into place; managers handed over names and IDs of problem employees; soldiers moved in and out of the plant's human resources office, often with personnel folders in hand. The suit claims problem employees were often taken at work, and for no reason but "bad behavior." Others were dragged from their homes by men who used the victim's work credentials to identify him. After days in detention, the men were fired by Ford for "abandonment of work."

"They used the military to get rid of the labor movement," says Troiani. "They wanted to be able to run the factory without us."

Tomas Ojea Quintana, Troiani's lawyer, worked for three years to sew together the evidence. The suit, which is both criminal and civil, seeks the arrest of an ex-soldier and four former company officials, including a security chief Quintana says later worked at the US Embassy. Quintana is also asking a judge to nullify the two-year statute of limitations on civil suits in cases in which the suits involve human rights, a request that, if granted, would set legal precedent and open Ford to eventual monetary damages. "If he rules in our favor, this will set a historical precedent and potentially open the door for other suits like this," Quintana said.

Quintana says his case was aided by declassified US State Department documents that helped map the extent of industrial cooperation with state forces. In 1978 a US Embassy official in Buenos Aires wrote to Washington to report on "disappeared" workers at an Argentine ceramics plant. The document said US officials in Argentina believed there existed "in general a high degree of cooperation between [company] directors and security agencies directed to eliminate terrorist infiltrators from industry workplaces and minimize the risk of industrial conflict."

Quintana says he thinks he has a "fifty-fifty chance" of winning. The social and legal climate is surely ripe. In 2005 the Argentine Supreme Court overturned a controversial amnesty law that since 1984 had granted legal immunity to junta leaders. Eleonora Rabinovich, an Argentine lawyer and journalist, says Argentines typically recognize "that the climate is turning more and more positive toward this kind of litigation, especially with the government promoting the revocation of the pardons [of military officials] and the reopening of several cases" of human rights violations. While no government official would comment directly on the case, Nurea Pedregal, a spokesperson for the Under Secretariat for Human and Social Rights, which disburses financial payments to families harmed by the dictatorship, says the Argentine government stands ready to recognize and pay anyone proven to have had a family member disappeared by the regime.

For Quintana, for now at least, it's more about truth than dollars. "Ford lawyers have not had to answer to anything official until now," he says. "We are not even talking about money now. We want the company to confess its role."

Ford representatives in Argentina, Germany and the United States failed to respond to interview requests.

As Troiani and millions of Argentines come to grips with a bloody past, a new and controversial law makes March 24, the anniversary of the coup, a national holiday, a time to remember so as not to repeat. In the meantime, Troiani's wife, Elisa, still doesn't know how or when to explain the bad things to her young grandchild. He walked into the living room while I was on the couch. "He asked who you were," Elisa told me, saying he's still too young to understand. "I had to tell him you were Pedro's friend who came to visit. What could I say?" KELLY HEARN

Kelly Hearn, a former UPI reporter, is a correspondent for the Christian Science Monitor *and other publications. He is the 2006 recipient of the Samuel Chavkin Investigative Journalism Grant.*

NATION NOTES

We warmly congratulate contributing editor Kai Bird, along with his co-author (and *Nation* contributor) Martin Sherwin, on winning the Pulitzer Prize for biography for their *American Prometheus: The Triumph and Tragedy of J. Robert Oppenheimer* (an excerpt ran in our April 25, 2005, issue). It is a formidable work, twenty-five years in the making. Kai worked here in the late 1970s and much of the 1980s as assistant editor, associate editor and columnist.

* * *

Rabbi Arthur Hertzberg, who died April 17, aged 84, was a provocative, liberal-minded Conservative rabbi, a scholar and teacher and a prolific author; he served as president of the American Jewish Congress and vice president of the World Jewish Congress. He contributed several pieces to *The Nation* and reported on Israel in 1950.

* * *

ON THE WEB: Robert Scheer writes that Bush's nutty nuclear braggadocio on Iran is a sign of weakness. Antonino D'Ambrosio considers the arrest of a London man accused of terrorism for singing The Clash's "London Calling."

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ALEXANDER COCKBURN

Obama: As He Rises, He Falls

I was harsh about Senator Barack Obama of Illinois here a couple of weeks ago, and the very next morning his press aide, Tommy Vietor, was on the phone howling about inaccuracies. It was an illuminating conversation.

Obama's man took grave exception to my use of the phrase "distancing himself" to describe what his boss had done when Illinois's senior senator, Dick Durbin, got into trouble for likening conditions at Guantánamo to those in a Nazi or Stalin-era camp. This was one of Durbin's finer moments, and he duly paid the penalty by having to eat crow on the Senate floor.

His fellow senator, Obama, did not support him in any way. Obama said, "We have a tendency to demonize and jump on and make mockery of each other across the aisle, and that is particularly pronounced when we make mistakes. Each and every one of us is going to make a mistake once in a while...and what we hope is that our track record of service, the scope of how we've operated and interacted with people, will override whatever particular mistake we make." That's three uses of the word "mistake." This isn't distancing?

Nor did Obama's man like my description of Obama's cheerleading for the nuke-Iran crowd. Obama recently declared that when it comes to the US posture on Iran, all options, including military ones, should be on the table. "All options on the table" is standard senatorial tub-thump, meaning We can nuke 'em if we want to. Anybody aiming for high office in America has to be able to swear they're capable of dropping the Big One. Obama knows that. HRC knows it too, but nobody doubts her enthusiasms. That woman probably uses a bombsight to home in on her breakfast grapefruit.

If Obama had any sort of guts in such matters he would have said that if Iraq is to teach America's leaders any lesson, it is that reckless recourse to the military "option" carries a dreadful price tag. He did nothing of the sort, which is not surprising to anyone who read his November 22 speech to the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations.

Remember the context. Representative Jack Murtha had just given a savage jolt to the White House, declaring, "I believe we need to turn Iraq over to the Iraqis.... The United States will immediately redeploy.... All of Iraq must know that Iraq is free, free from a United States occupation. And I believe this will send a signal to the Sunnis to join the political process."

Who knows, if Murtha's counsel had been followed, maybe it would have saved Iraq from the horrors now unraveling. But Democrats fled Murtha, few with more transparent calculation than Obama, who voyaged to the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations, there to soothe the assembled elites with such balderdash as, "The President could take the politics out of Iraq once and for all if he would simply go on television and say to the American people 'Yes, we made mistakes.'" Or, "We need to focus our attention on how to reduce the US military footprint in Iraq. Notice that I say 'reduce,' and not 'fully withdraw.'" Or, "2006 should be the year that...the various Iraqi factions must arrive at a fair political accommodation to defeat the insurgency; and...the Administration must make available to Congress critical information on reality-based benchmarks that will help us succeed in Iraq."

Obama is concerned with the task of reassuring the masters of the Democratic Party, and beyond that the politico-corporate establishment, that he is safe. There are plenty of black people like that in Congress now, as BlackCommentator.com describes on a weekly basis. After a decade or so of careful corporate funding, the Black Congressional Caucus is sinking under the weight of DLC clones like Artur Davis of Alabama, Albert Wynn of Maryland, Sanford Bishop and David Scott of Georgia, William Jefferson of Louisiana and Gregory Meeks of New York.

Hence Vietor's sensitivity to the allusion in my column to Obama's "mentor" being Senator Joe Lieberman. As a freshman senator, Vietor insisted, Obama had been assigned Lieberman as mentor. Read the *Hartford Courant* and you'll find Lieberman boasting that Obama picked him.

Either way, it's obvious that Obama could have brokered a different mentor if he'd so desired, the same way he could have declined to go and tout for Lieberman at that Democratic Party dinner in Connecticut at the end of March. But he clearly didn't, because he wanted to send out a reassuring signal, in the same way he's doing with his PAC, the Hopefund, which is raising money for fourteen of his senate colleagues. According to BlackCommentator, ten of them are DLC—half the DLC presence in the Senate.

There has been a more substantive signal, keenly savored by the corporate world, where Obama voted for one of its most cherished pieces of legislation, sought for years, namely "tort reform."

In his political advance, chest now ablaze with all the usual medals from the opinion formers for "pragmatism," Obama is divesting himself of all legitimate claims to be any sort of popular champion, as opposed to being another safe black, like Condoleezza Rice, whom Obama voted to confirm. The Empire relishes such servants.

Obama, the constitutional law professor, fled Senator Russell Feingold's motion to censure the President. He voted Yea on March 2 to final passage of the USA Patriot Improvement and Reauthorization Act, unlike ten of his Democratic colleagues.

Vietor, Obama's man, laughed derisively at my complaint at the end of my column about how most of Cynthia McKinney's Democratic colleagues had fled her. "She apologized!" Vietor cried, as though that settled the matter. In fact the betrayal of McKinney, particularly by her black colleagues, was an appalling and important political moment, rewarding the racism showered on McKinney and the ongoing implosion of the Congressional Black Caucus. Obama, of course, distanced himself from her too. ■

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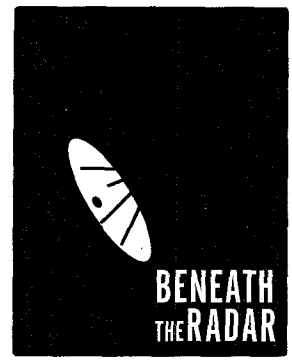
GARY YOUNGE

The Battle of New Orleans



"There are two types of power," said Linda Jeffers, addressing an accountability session of New Orleans mayoral candidates at the city's Trinity Episcopal Church. "Organized money and organized people." Since Hurricane Katrina the battle between those two forces has shaped the struggle to rebuild New Orleans. Now it is set to intensify.

The one thing both seem to agree on is that neither wants the city to return to the way it was before the hurricane. The people of New Orleans, most of whom are black and many of whom are poor, want schools that will educate their children, jobs that will pay a living wage and neighborhoods where capital investment matches the large pools of social capital created by their churches and close-knit communities. Organized money has something else in mind: the destruction of many of those communities, the permanent removal of those who lived in them and a city that follows the gentrification patterns of racial removal and class cleansing that have played out elsewhere in America. Under these circumstances, the organization of people has been impressive. Grassroots groups have done a remarkable job of cohering those scattered throughout the country into a political constituency.

As Jeffers spoke, the city's mayoral candidates sat before an audience of more than 500 who had been bused in from Tennessee and elsewhere in Louisiana, as well as several hundred evacuees in Houston, Austin, San Antonio and Dallas who were watching the candidates being questioned on satellite. Five days later Jeffers, a leader with the nonprofit Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF), who moved from Gentilly to Houston after Katrina, schlepped through the unforgiving Texas heat distributing food and signing up eighty evacuees for their absentee ballots at the Encore housing complex. Meanwhile, various organizations have been ferrying people from neighboring states to satellite polling stations dotted around Louisiana for early voting in the April 22 election.

But they are operating under intolerable conditions, not least where these elections are concerned. By almost any standard—international or local—these elections are neither free nor fair. More than half the city's residents have not returned. But requests for polling stations to be set up in the major towns outside the state where they have resettled were rejected by a federal court judge, a decision supported by the Louisiana legislature. "You're telling me they can do it in Iraq but they can't do it here?" asks Walter Milton, another IAF leader.

As a result, people have to travel hundreds of miles to vote or organize an absentee vote. The overwhelming majority of those who will be most adversely affected are once again black and poor. So Jim Crow is on the ballot. But this is the New South with a new, more subtle but no less effective racism. Black demands for full citizenship no longer fall afoul of the law of the land but instead the law of probability. They were more likely to be flooded, more likely to be displaced, least likely to be able to return and therefore least likely to be able to vote.

With organized people thus thwarted, organized money has asserted itself with great effect. The current mayor, Ray Nagin, was the candidate of big business. Nicknamed Ray Reagan, he came to power in 2002 with a minority of black support and the overwhelming backing of whites and the business community. But then, in November, he rejected a plan by the Urban Land Institute. The institute had presented a map with three "investment zones." The zones earmarked for mass buyouts and future green zones, and the last to be invested in, were overwhelmingly black: eastern New Orleans and Gentilly; the northern part of Lakeview; and parts of the Lower Ninth Ward, Broadmoor, Mid-City and Hollygrove. New Orleans needed a smaller footprint, they said; but it would be big enough to kick out most African-Americans and the poor.

When Nagin balked, business looked for some viable new candidates. Its favored son this time around is Ron Forman, head of the Audubon Nature Institute. But as a backup, business interests are also investing in the local political aristocracy in the guise of Mitch Landrieu. Landrieu, currently Louisiana's lieutenant governor, is also the brother of Mary Landrieu—one of Louisiana's US senators—and the son of Moon Landrieu, New Orleans's last white mayor, who left office in 1978. So the people have a vote; but business has picked the incumbent and the two main challengers. Unlike Nagin, Landrieu and Forman are white. With little to choose from on substantive issues among the three of them, the voters may base their decision on the symbolism of race. Given everything that happened following Katrina, this is probably inevitable; given the needs of the city as a result, it is regrettable. It will take more than melanin to rebuild this city; indeed, it was an obsession with melanin that destroyed it.

Like teenagers discovering sex, the media developed an intense fascination with the mundane facts of American life following the hurricane: namely, the glaring disparities in race and class that persist and pervade. Having gorged themselves on the undeniable evidence of glaring disparities in race and class, they soon got sick of the subject and went to sleep.

Up in the mostly white and wealthy Garden District, a delicious choice of croissants is offered at the Boulangerie on Magazine Street—mockingly referred to as the "aisle of denial." Down in the Ninth Ward they're still finding dead bodies, nine in March plus a skull, some skeletonized and others half eaten by animals.

One waits in vain for CNN's Anderson Cooper to revive the indignation that elevated him to prime time. But there is no dramatic backdrop to the systematic and systemic exclusions of African-Americans this time around. It's as though corpses have to be floating down the street and thousands stranded without food or water before racism is once more worthy of note. "I came down off my rooftop and I walked through the waters," said Jeffers. "And now I feel like they're taking me back on to the rooftop again." Organized people are trying to move to higher ground; organized money is trying to sell the land beneath their feet. ■

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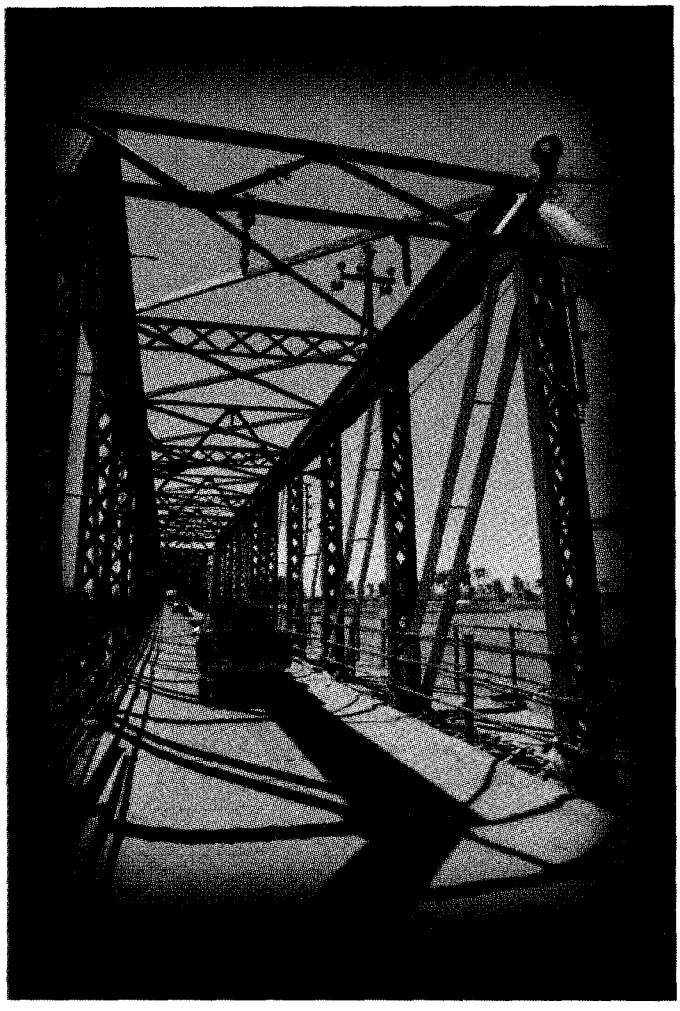
BLOOD IS THICKER THAN BLACKWATER

JEREMY SCAHILL



FAMILIES OF PRIVATE SOLDIERS KILLED IN FALLUJA PUT A MAJOR WAR PROFITEER IN THE CROSS-HAIRS

It is one of the most infamous incidents of the war in Iraq: On March 31, 2004, four private American security contractors get lost and end up driving through the center of Falluja, a hotbed of Sunni resistance to the US occupation. Shortly after entering the city, they get stuck in traffic, and their small convoy is ambushed. Several armed men approach the two vehicles and open fire from behind, repeatedly shooting the men at point-blank range. Within moments, their bodies are dragged from the vehicles and a crowd descends on them, tearing them to pieces. Eventually, their corpses are chopped and burned. The remains of two of the men are strung up on a bridge over the Euphrates River and left to dangle. The gruesome image is soon beamed across the globe.

In the Oval Office the killings were taken as "a challenge to America's resolve," according to the *LA Times*. President Bush issued a statement through his spokesperson. "We will not be intimidated," he said. "We will finish the job." Brig. Gen. Mark Kimmitt vowed, "We will be back in Falluja.... We will hunt down the criminals.... It's going to be deliberate. It will be precise, and it will be overwhelming." Within days of the ambush, US forces laid siege to Falluja, beginning what would be one of the most brutal and sustained US operations of the occupation.

For most people, the gruesome killings were the first they had ever heard of Blackwater USA, a small, North Carolina–based private security company. Since the Falluja incident, and also because of it, Blackwater has emerged as one of the most successful and profitable security contractors operating in Iraq. The company and its secretive, megamillionaire, right-wing Christian founder, Erik Prince, position Blackwater as a patriotic extension of the US military, and its employees are required to take an oath of loyalty to the Constitution. After the killings, Blackwater released a statement saying the "heinous mistreatment of our friends exhibits the extraordinary conditions under which we voluntarily work to bring freedom and democracy to the Iraqi people.... Our tasks are dangerous and while we feel sadness for our fallen colleagues, we also feel pride and satisfaction that we are making a difference for the people of Iraq."

The company swiftly rose to international prominence: Journalists were flooding Blackwater with calls, and military types were clamoring to sign up for work. "They're angry...they're saying, 'Let me go over,'" Blackwater spokesman Chris Bertelli told *The Virginian-Pilot* ten days after the killings, adding that applications to work for Blackwater had increased "considerably" in that time. "It's natural to assume that the visibility of the dangers could drive up salaries for the folks who have to stand in the path of the bullets," he said. A day after the killings, Prince enlisted the services of the Alexander Strategy Group, a now disgraced but once powerful Republican lobbying and PR firm. By the end of 2004 Blackwater's president, Gary Jackson, was bragging to the press of "staggering" 600 percent growth. "This is a billion-dollar industry," Jackson said in October 2004. "And Blackwater has only scratched the surface of it."

But today, Blackwater is facing a potentially devastating battle—this time not in Iraq but in court. The company has

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been slapped with a lawsuit that, if successful, will send shock waves through the world of private security firms, a world that has expanded significantly since Bush took office. Blackwater is being sued for the wrongful deaths of Stephen "Scott" Helvenston, Mike Teague, Jerko Zovko and Wesley Batalona by the families of the men slain in Falluja.

More than 428 private contractors have been killed to date in Iraq, and US taxpayers are footing almost the entire compensation bill to their families. "This is a precedent-setting case," says Marc Miles, an attorney for the families. "Just like with tobacco litigation or gun litigation, once they lose that first case, they'd be fearful there would be other lawsuits to follow."

The families' two-year quest to hold those responsible accountable has taken them not to Falluja but to the sprawling Blackwater compound in North Carolina. As they tell it, after demanding answers about how the men ended up dead in Falluja that day and being stonewalled at every turn, they decided to conduct their own investigation. "Blackwater sent my son and the other three into Falluja knowing that there was a very good possibility this could happen," says Katy Helvenston, the mother of 38-year-old Scott Helvenston, whose charred body was hung from the Falluja bridge. "Iraqis physically did it, and it doesn't get any more horrible than what they did to my son, does it? But I hold Blackwater responsible one thousand percent."

After being stonewalled by Blackwater at every turn, the families of the slain men decided to conduct their own investigation.

In late 2004 the case caught the attention of the high-powered California trial lawyer Daniel Callahan, fresh from a record-setting $934 million jury decision in a corporate fraud case. On January 5, 2005, the families filed the lawsuit against Blackwater in Wake County, North Carolina. "What we have right now is something worse than the wild, wild west going on in Iraq," Callahan says. "Blackwater is able to operate over there in Iraq free from any oversight that would typically exist in a civilized society. As we expose Blackwater in this case, it will also expose the inefficient and corrupt system that exists over there."

Scott Helvenston was a walking ad for the military. He came from a proud family of Republicans; his great-great-uncle, Elihu Root, was once US Secretary of War and the 1912 Nobel Peace Prize–winner. Scott was tall, tan and chiseled and, by all accounts, a model soldier and athlete. At 17 he made history by becoming the youngest person ever to complete the rigorous Navy SEAL program. He spent twelve years in the SEALs, four of them as an instructor, and then tried his luck with Hollywood. He trained Demi Moore for her film *G.I. Jane* and did a few stints on reality television. In one, *Man vs. Beast*, he was the only contestant to defeat the beast, outmaneuvering a chimpanzee in an obstacle course. Once the cover boy on a Navy calendar, he also had several workout videos.

If it had been up to Katy Helvenston, her son wouldn't have been in Iraq at all. "We had argued about him going over there," she recalls. "I believe that we should have gone into Afghanistan, but I never believed we should have gone into Iraq, and Scott bought the whole story about Saddam Hussein being involved with Al Qaeda and all that. He believed in what he was doing." He also had a financial motivation. In early 2004 Helvenston was between jobs and was eking out a living with the stints on reality TV, the movie consulting and the fitness videos. "It was good money, but it was never enough," his mother remembers. He was divorced but continued to support his ex-wife and two children. His mother says he took the job with Blackwater because the company offered short-term, two-month contracts, and Scott viewed it as an opportunity to turn his life around. "He said, 'I'm gonna go over there, make some money, maybe make a difference. I'll only be away from my kids for a couple of months.' That's why he chose Blackwater," she recalls.

Helvenston arrived for training at Blackwater's North Carolina campus around March 1, 2004. The man heading the training was Justin McQuown, nicknamed Shrek, after the green ogre movie cartoon character. According to the suit, McQuown lacked the credentials of Helvenston and other ex-SEALs. "During training, McQuown would often improperly instruct the class or provide erroneous information, tactics or techniques," the suit alleges. "On occasion, Helvenston would attempt to politely assist McQuown by offering his expertise on the correct manner of the particular training exercise. The fact that [McQuown]...was being exposed infuriated him." Scott's mother believes, based on Scott's e-mails and conversations with contractors who served with her son, that McQuown feared that Scott might replace him at the company.

After the training session, Helvenston got on a plane to Kuwait, where he touched down on March 18. It seemed like an ideal situation for him, as two of his friends from his days on the reality TV show *Combat Missions* were helping to run the Blackwater operations: John and Kathy Potter. When Helvenston set off for the Middle East, his family thought he was going to be working on Blackwater's high-profile job of guarding the head of the US occupation, Paul Bremer. At $21 million, it represented the company's biggest contract in Iraq. As it turned out, Helvenston was slated to carry out a far less glamorous task. John Potter had recently teamed Blackwater up with a Kuwaiti business called Regency Hotel and Hospital Company, and together the firms won a security contract with Eurest Support Services (ESS), guarding convoys transporting kitchen equipment to the US military. Blackwater and Regency had essentially wrestled the ESS contract from another security firm, Control Risk Group, and were eager to win more lucrative contracts from ESS in its other division servicing construction projects in Iraq. Unbeknownst to Helvenston, this goal would drive a series of events that would ultimately lead to his death.

According to former Blackwater officials, Blackwater, Regency and ESS were engaged in a classic war-profiteering scheme. Blackwater was paying its men $600 a day but billing Regency $815, according to the Raleigh *News and Observer*. "In addition," the paper reports, "Blackwater billed Regency separately for all its overhead and costs in Iraq." Regency would then bill ESS an unknown amount for these services. Kathy Potter told the *News*

Jeremy Scahill, a correspondent for Democracy Now!, *is a Nation Institute Puffin Foundation Writing Fellow.*

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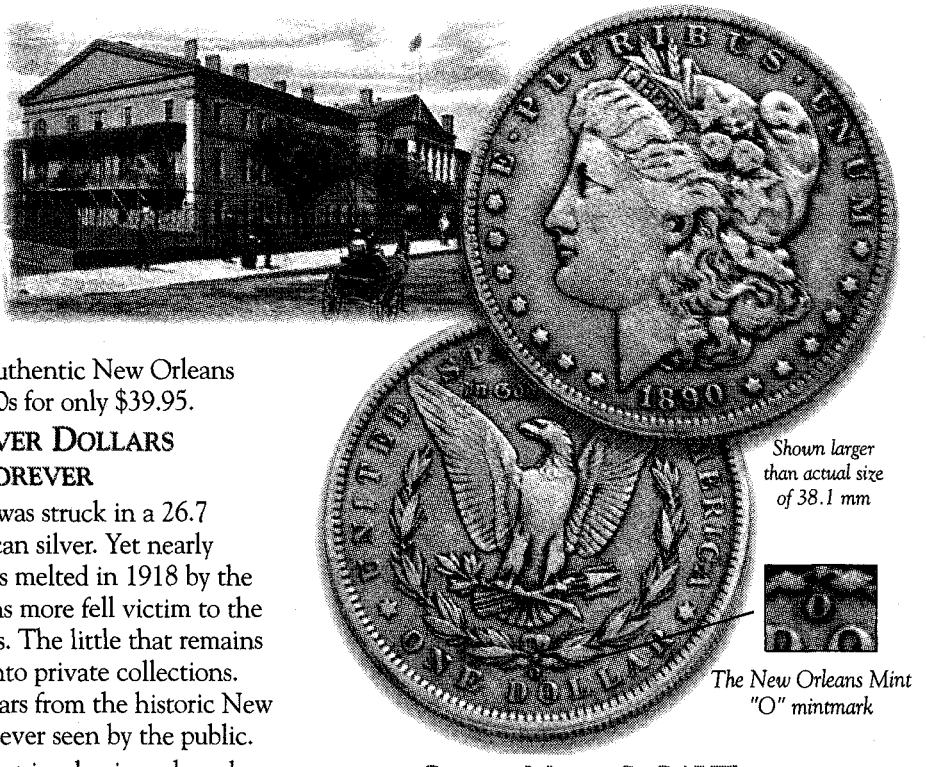

Shown larger than actual size of 38.1 mm

The New Orleans Mint "O" mintmark

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and Observer that Regency would "quote ESS a price, say $1,500 per man per day, and then tell Blackwater that it had quoted ESS $1,200." ESS then contracted with Halliburton subsidiary KBR, which in turn billed the government an unknown amount of money for the same security services, according to the paper. KBR/Halliburton refuses to discuss the matter and will not confirm any relationship with ESS.

All this was shady enough—but the real danger for Helvenston and the others lay in Blackwater's decision to cut corners to make even more money. The original contract between Blackwater/Regency and ESS, obtained by *The Nation*, recognized that "the current threat in the Iraqi theater of operations" would remain "consistent and dangerous," and called for a minimum of three men in each vehicle on security missions "with a minimum of two *armored* vehicles to support ESS movements." [Emphasis added.]

But on March 12, 2004, Blackwater and Regency signed a subcontract, which specified security provisions identical to the original except for one word: "armored." Blackwater deleted it from the contract.

"When they took that word 'armored' out, Blackwater was able to save $1.5 million in not buying armored vehicles, which they could then put in their pocket," says attorney Miles. "These men were told that they'd be operating in armored vehicles. Had they been, I sincerely believe that they'd be alive today. They were killed by insurgents literally walking up and shooting them with small-arms fire. This was not a roadside bomb, it was not any other explosive device. It was merely small-arms fire, which could have been repelled by armored vehicles."

The real danger for the four men, the lawsuit alleges, lay in Blackwater's decision to cut corners in order to make even more money.

Before Helvenston, Teague, Zovko and Batalona were ever sent into Falluja, the omission of the word "armored" was brought to the attention of Blackwater management by John Potter, according to the families' lawyers. They say Blackwater refused to redraft the contract. Potter persisted, insisting that his men be provided with armored vehicles. This would have resulted in Blackwater losing profits and would also have delayed the start of the ESS job. According to the suit, Blackwater was gung-ho to start in order to impress ESS and win further contracts. So on March 24 the company removed Potter as program manager, replacing him with McQuown, who, according to the families' lawyers, was far more willing than Potter to overlook security considerations in the interest of profits. It was this corporate greed, combined with McQuown's animosity toward Scott Helvenston, which began at the training in North Carolina, that the families allege played a significant role in the deaths of Helvenston and the other three contractors.

Scott Helvenston and his team were to deploy to Iraq on March 29. But late on the evening of March 27, McQuown called Helvenston and told him that he needed to pack his things immediately, that he would be leaving at 5 AM with a completely different team. According to the lawsuit, "It was virtually unheard of to take a single person, like Scott Helvenston, and place him on a different group with whom he had never trained or even met." Helvenston resisted the change. Several other contractors stepped forward, offering to go in his place. McQuown refused to allow it.

Later that night, according to Scott's mother, McQuown came up to Helvenston's hotel room. "He was told at that time that he was not going to be doing security for the ambassador, Paul Bremer, and he was going to escort a convoy of trucks to pick up kitchen equipment. And Scott says, 'You're nuts,' you know, he says, 'I'm not goin' in there to Falluja. You're out of your mind. That's not what I was hired to do.' And at that point McQuown apparently told him that if he didn't do it, he would be fired immediately. He would have to reimburse any monies that had been paid to him, and he was on his own to get home. Well, that left Scott no choice. So the next morning they were off."

The night before he left, Helvenston sent an e-mail to the "Owner, President and Upper Management" of Blackwater, subject: "extreme unprofessionalism." In this e-mail, obtained by *The Nation*, he complained that the behavior of McQuown (referred to as "Justin Shrek" in the e-mail) was "very manipulative, duplicitive [*sic*], immature and unprofessional." He describes how his original team leader tried to appeal to Shrek not to reassign him, but, Helvenston wrote, "I think [the team leader] felt that there was a hidden agenda. 'Lets see if we can screw with Scott.'" Those were some of the last words Helvenston would ever write.

Callahan says that if Blackwater and McQuown had done in the United States what they are alleged to have done in Iraq, "There would be criminal charges against them." What happened between McQuown and Helvenston was no mere personality conflict. "Corporations are fictional entities—they only act through their personnel," explains Miles. "You need to show intent. You need to put a face on these acts. With regard to the wrongful death of these four men, that face is Justin McQuown of Blackwater." The company refused to comment on the case, but McQuown's lawyer, William Crenshaw, told *The Nation* there are "numerous serious factual errors" in the lawsuit, saying, "On behalf of Mr. McQuown, we extend our sincerest sympathies to the families of the deceased. It is regrettable and inaccurate to suggest that Mr. McQuown contributed in any way to this terrible tragedy."

On March 30, 2004, Helvenston, Teague, Zovko and Batalona left Baghdad on the ESS security mission. The suit alleges that there were six guards available that day, but McQuown intervened and ordered only the four to be sent. The other two were kept behind at Blackwater's Baghdad facility to perform clerical duties. A Blackwater official later boasted, the suit says, that they saved two lives by not sending all six men.

The four men were, in fact, working under contracts guaranteeing that they would travel with a six-person team. But their personal contracts also warned of death and/or injury caused by everything from "civil uprising" and "terrorist activity" to "poisoning" and "flying debris." In filing its motion to dismiss the lawsuit, Blackwater quoted from its standard contract, insisting that those who sign it "fully appreciate the dangers and voluntarily assume these risks as well as any other risks in any way

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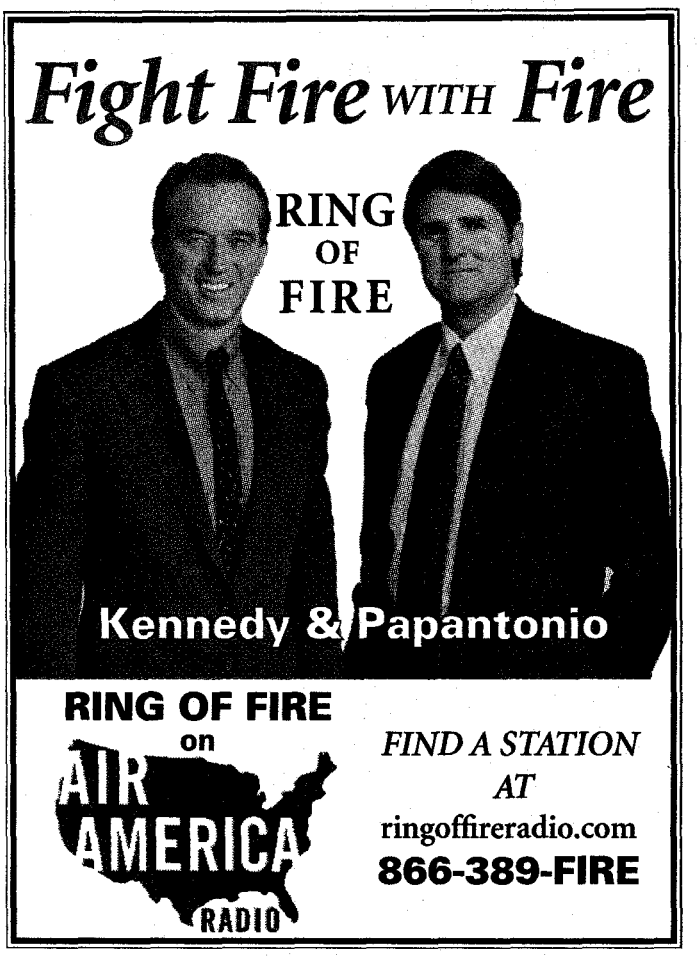
(whether directly or indirectly) connected to the Engagement."

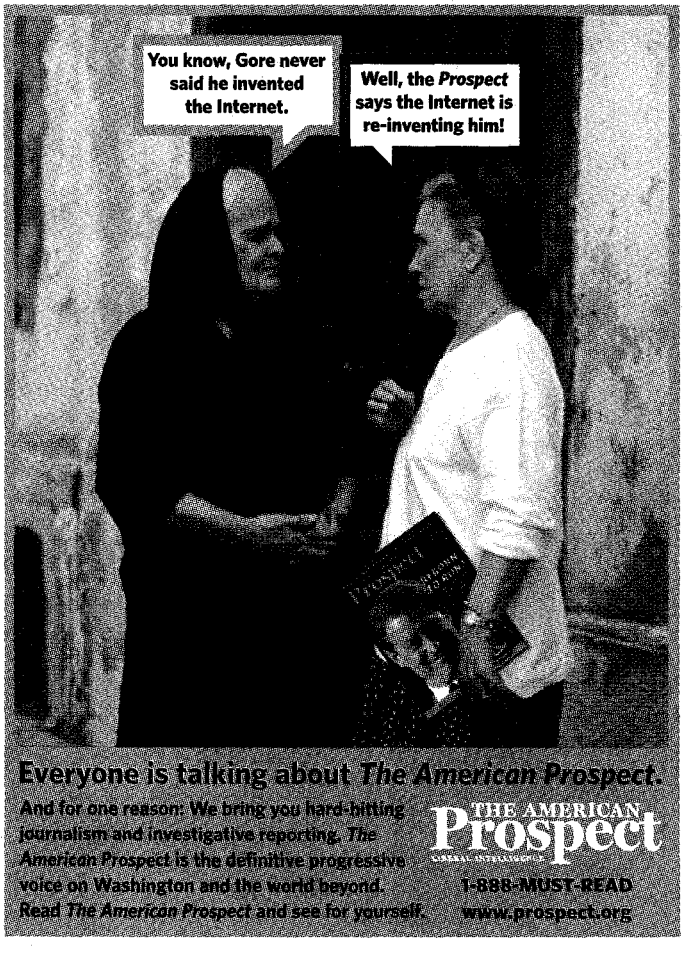
Reading this, it would seem that Blackwater has a reasonable defense. Not so, say the families of the four men and their lawyers. They do not deny that the men were aware of the risks they were taking, but they charge that Blackwater knowingly refused to provide guaranteed safeguards, among them: They would have armored vehicles; there would be three men in each vehicle—a driver, a navigator and a rear gunner; and the rear gunner would be armed with a heavy automatic weapon, such as a "SAW Mach 46," which can fire up to 850 rounds per minute, allowing the gunner to fight off any attacks from the rear. "None of that was true," says attorney Callahan. Instead, each vehicle had only two men and far less powerful "Mach 4" guns, which they had not even had a chance to test out. "Without the big gun, without the third man, without the armored vehicle, they were sitting ducks," says Callahan.

The men got lost on the evening of March 30 and eventually found a Marine base near Falluja where they slept for a few hours. "Scotty had tried to call me in the middle of the night," Katy Helvenston remembers. "I had my bedroom phone ringer turned off—I didn't get the call, so he left me a message. It mostly was, 'Mom, please don't worry, I'm OK. I'm gonna be home soon and I'm gonna see ya. We're gonna go have fun. I'm gonna take care of you.' You know, just stuff like that, which obviously wasn't true. By the time I got the message he'd already been killed."

Shortly after Helvenston left that message, the men left the base and set out for their destination. Without a detailed map, they took the most direct route, through the center of Falluja. According to Callahan, there was a safer alternative route that went around the city, which the men were unaware of because of Blackwater's failure to conduct a "risk assessment" before the trip, as mandated by the contract. The suit alleges that the four men should have had a chance to gather intelligence and familiarize themselves with the dangerous routes they would be traveling. This was not done, according to Miles, "so as to pad Blackwater's bottom line" and to impress ESS with Blackwater's efficiency in order to win more contracts. The suit also alleges that McQuown "intentionally refused to allow the Blackwater security contractors to conduct" ride-alongs with the teams they were replacing from Control Risk Group. (In fact, the suit contends that Blackwater "fabricated critical documents" and "created" a pre-trip risk assessment "after this deadly ambush occurred.")

The men entered Falluja with Helvenston and Teague in one vehicle and Zovko and Batalona in the other. "Since the team was driving without a rear-gunner and did not have armored vehicles, the insurgents were able to literally walk up behind the vehicles and shoot all four men with small arms at close range," the suit alleges. "Their bodies were pulled into the streets, burned and their charred remains were beaten and dismembered." The men, it goes on, "would be alive today" had Blackwater not forced them—under threat of being fired—to go unprepared on that mission. "The fact that these four Americans found themselves located in the high-risk, war-torn City of Fallujah without armored vehicles, automatic weapons, and fewer than the minimum number of team members was no accident," the suit alleges. "Instead, this team was sent out without the required equipment





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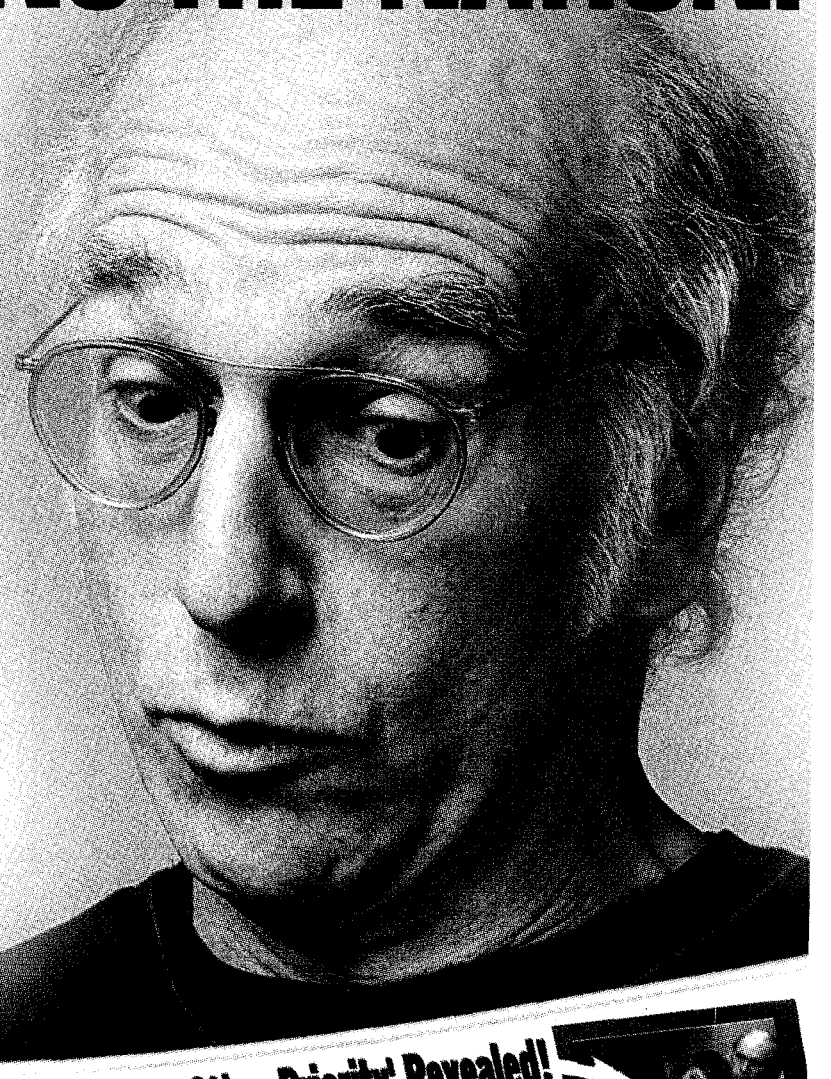

THAT'S WHY SO MANY SOMEBODIES READ IT.

(Legally speaking, of course, everything has an owner, but as a *Nation* editor once wrote, "it is one of the superb facts about *The Nation* that you can no more 'own' it than you can own the spirit it represents.")

Larry David is a longstanding Nation *reader.*

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and personnel by those in charge at Blackwater."

After the killings, Katy Helvenston joined the families of Mike Teague, Jerko Zovko and Wesley Batalona in grieving and in seeking details about the incident. Blackwater founder Erik Prince personally delivered money to some of the families for funeral expenses, and the company moved to get the men's wives and children benefits under the government's Defense Base Act, which in some cases insures those on contract supporting US military operations abroad.

But then things started to get strange. Blackwater held a memorial service for the men at its compound. The families were gathered in a conference room, where they thought they would be told how the men had died. The Zovko family asked Blackwater to see the "After Action Report" detailing the incident. "We were actually told," recalls Zovko's mother, Danica, "that if we wanted to see the paperwork of how my son and his co-workers were killed that we'd have to sue them."

Thus began the legal battle between Blackwater and the dead men's families. In one of its few statements on the suit, Blackwater spokesperson Chris Bertelli said, "Blackwater hopes that the honor and dignity of our fallen comrades are not diminished by the use of the legal process." Katy Helvenston calls that "total BS in my opinion," and says that the families decided to sue only after being stonewalled, misled and lied to by the company. "Blackwater seems to understand money. That's the only thing they understand," she says. "They have no values, they have no morals. They're whores. They're the whores of war."

'Blackwater seems to understand money. That's the only thing they understand. They're the whores of war.' —Katy Helvenston

Since its filing in January 2005, the case has moved slowly through the legal system. For its part, Blackwater is represented by multiple law firms. Its lead counsel is Greenberg Traurig, the influential DC law firm that once employed lobbyist Jack Abramoff. The lawyers for the families charge that Blackwater has continued its practice of stonewalling. While some of that may be legitimate defense tactics, the lawyers argue that the company has actively prevented court-ordered depositions from taking place, including taking steps to prevent a key witness from testifying: John Potter, the man who blew the whistle on Blackwater's removal of the word "armored" from the contract and was subsequently removed.

Attorney Marc Miles says that shortly after the suit was filed, he asked the court in North Carolina for an "expedited order" to depose John Potter. The deposition was set for January 28, 2005, and Miles was to fly to Alaska, where the Potters were living. But three days before the deposition, Miles says, "Blackwater hired Potter up, flew him to Washington where it's my understanding he met with Blackwater representatives and their lawyers. [Blackwater] then flew him to Jordan for ultimate deployment in the Middle East," Miles says. "Obviously they concealed a material witness by hiring him and sending him out of the country." Callahan says Blackwater took advantage of the Potters' financial straits to hinder the case against the company. "Potter didn't have any other gainful employment, because many of these men who are ex-military, their skills don't transfer easily into the civilian sector," he says, adding that after Potter was removed for blowing the whistle on the armor issue, the company abandoned him "until they needed him to avoid this subpoena and this deposition and they said, 'We need you and we need you now.' And zoom, off he goes." Blackwater subsequently attempted to have Potter's deposition order dissolved, but a federal court said no.

Blackwater has not offered a rebuttal to the specific allegations made by the families, except to deny in general that they are valid. It has fought to have the case dismissed on grounds that because Blackwater is servicing US armed forces it cannot be sued for workers' deaths or injuries and that all liability lies with the government. In its motion to dismiss the case in federal court, Blackwater argues that the families of the four men killed in Falluja are entitled only to government insurance payments. That's why the company moved swiftly to apply for benefits for the families under the Defense Base Act. Many firms specializing in contractor law advertise the DBA as the best way for corporations servicing the war to avoid being sued. In fact, Blackwater's then–general counsel, Steve Capace, gave a workshop last May on the subject to an "International Super-Conference" for contractors. In the presentation, called "Managing Contracting Risks in Battlefield Conditions," Capace laid out a legal strategy for deflecting the kind of lawsuit Blackwater now faces. That's why this case is being watched so closely by other firms operating in Iraq. "What Blackwater is trying to do is to sweep all of their wrongful conduct into the Defense Base Act," says Miles. "What they're trying to do is to say, 'Look—we can do anything we want and not be held accountable. We can send our men out to die so that we can pad our bottom line, and if anybody comes back at us, we have insurance.' It's essentially insurance to kill."

Given the uncounted tens of thousands of Iraqis who have died since the invasion and the slaughter in Falluja that followed the Blackwater incident, some might say this lawsuit is just warmongers bickering—no honor among thieves. Indeed, the real scandal here isn't that these men were sent into Falluja with only a four-person detail when there should have been six or that they didn't have a powerful enough machine gun to kill their attackers. It's that the United States has opened Iraq's door to mercenaries who roam the country with impunity.

"Over a thousand people died because of what happened to Scotty that day," says Katy Helvenston. "There's a lot of innocent people that have died." While this suit doesn't mention the retaliatory US attack on Falluja that followed the Blackwater killings, the case is significant because it could blow the lid off a system that allows corporations to face zero liability while reaping huge profits in Iraq and other war zones. "Scotty's not going to die in vain," says his mother. "I'm driven and I'm not going to quit. They will be accountable."

Still, Blackwater has friends in high places. It's a well-connected, Republican-controlled business that has made its fortune because of the Bush Administration. Company founder Erik Prince and his family have poured serious money into Republican causes and campaign coffers over the past twenty years. An analysis of

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Prince's contributions prepared for *The Nation* by the Center for Responsive Politics reveals that since 1989, Prince and his wife have given some $275,550 to Republican campaigns. Prince has never given a penny to a Democrat. While it is not unheard of for a successful business to cast its lot entirely with one party, it has clearly paid off. Shortly after George W. Bush was re-elected in November 2004, Gary Jackson sent out a mass celebratory e-mail declaring, "Bush Wins, Four More Years!! Hooyah!!"

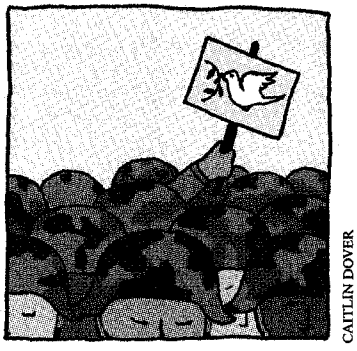
The White House, for its part, has turned the issue of accountability of Blackwater and other private security companies into a joke, literally. This April at a forum at Johns Hopkins, Bush was asked by a student about bringing "private military contractors under a system of law," to which Bush replied, laughing, that he was going to ask Defense Secretary Rumsfeld, "I was going to—I pick up the phone and say, Mr. Secretary, I've got an interesting question [*laughter*]. This is what delegation—I don't mean to be dodging the question, although it's kind of convenient in this case, but never—[*laughter*] I really will—I'm going to call the Secretary and say you brought up a very valid question, and what are we doing about it? That's how I work." ■

IRAQ VET PEACE ACTIVISTS CONFRONT THE CULTURE OF THE VOLUNTEER MILITARY.

When GI Joe Says No

CHRISTIAN PARENTI

A young former US Army sniper wearing a desert camo uniform, an Iraqi kaffiyeh and mirrored sunglasses scans a ruined urban landscape of smashed homes, empty streets and garbage heaps. His sand-colored hat bears a small regulation-style military patch, or tab, that instead of reading "Airborne" or "Ranger" or "Special Forces" says "Shitbag"—common military parlance for bad soldier.



CAITLIN DOVER

This isn't Baghdad or Kabul. It's the Gulf Coast, and the column of young men and women in desert uniforms carrying American flags are with Iraq Veterans Against the War. They are part of a larger peace march that is making its way from Mobile to New Orleans. This is just one of IVAW's ongoing series of actions.

In all, about thirty-five Iraq vets cycled through this weeklong procession of 250. For the young, often very broke, very busy veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan, this represents a fairly strong showing. But many casual observers, influenced by memories of Vietnam-era protesting, when veterans mobilized in the thousands, expected that US soldiers in Iraq would turn against the war faster and in greater numbers than they have. An estimated 1 million Americans have served in Iraq and Afghanistan, but so far IVAW has only about 250 members.

For many of the more activist IVAW vets, their political evolution did not follow the simple trajectory one might expect, from idealism at enlistment to postcombat disillusionment. In fact, many of them shipped off to war despite serious political misgivings. "I went to Iraq opposing the war," says Garrett Reppenhagen, the former sniper with the irreverent potty-mouthed patch on his hat. Reppenhagen served a year with the Army's First Infantry Division in and around the very violent city of Baquba. "I was reading Zinn's *People's History* and John Perkins's *Economic Hit Man* before I went."

Christian Parenti, who writes frequently for The Nation, *is the author of* The Freedom: Shadows and Hallucinations in Occupied Iraq *(New Press).*

What's that? Someone went off to be killed or maimed or possibly to kill "hajjis" despite being an antiwar leftist? And Reppenhagen is not alone. A recent Zogby poll found that 29 percent of soldiers in Iraq favored immediate withdrawal, which some see as a sign of an imminent crisis in military discipline. But the poll could be read in exactly the opposite fashion. If the Army and Marines can keep the disgruntled soldiers fighting and fighting, even 70 percent of troops could favor immediate withdrawal and it would mean nothing.

The question for peace activists thus becomes: How is it that antiwar soldiers continue to fight? And what does it really take for an antiwar soldier to resist? The answers lie largely in the sociology of "unit cohesion" and the ways the military uses solidarity among soldiers as a form of social control. Similarly, the peace activism of IVAW requires the spread of an oppositional form of loyalty and camaraderie.

Since 1973, when Congress ended the draft, the armed forces have been restructured using unit cohesion as a form of deep discipline. In other words, social control in today's military operates through a system that could be straight from a text by French philosopher Michel Foucault: Soldiers are managed not with coercion but with freedom. Because they join of their own free will, they find it almost impossible to rebel. Volunteering implicates them, effectively stripping them of the victim status that conscription allowed. Soldiers who would resist are guilt-tripped and emotionally blackmailed into serving causes they hate. During my time embedded in Iraq, I met several antiwar soldiers, but none of them considered abandoning their comrades. They said things like "you signed that paper" or "they got that contract"—as if contracts are never broken or annulled.

If veterans are supposed to be at the heart of the peace movement, then it would serve progressives to understand this new military culture. Understanding the world of the military is also important because it is a major force in the socialization of young working-class Americans. If you're 20 or 22 and you're

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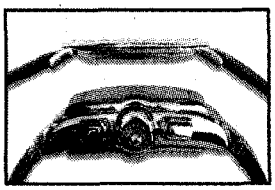

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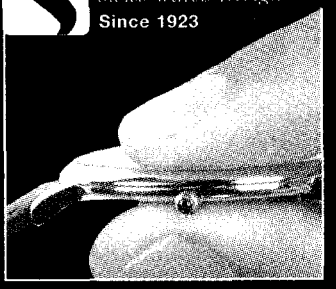

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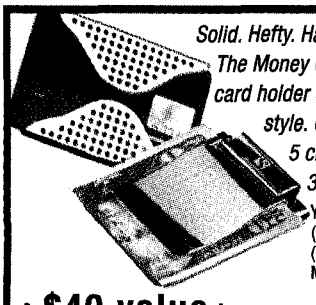

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not doing what many rich kids do (like a career-boosting summer internship in New York) or doing what some truly poor kids do (like going to state prison on drug charges), chances are you're learning about responsibility and adulthood, and escaping small-town or inner-city America, courtesy of the US armed forces. One of the key lessons you'll learn there is: Look out for your comrades, because they're looking out for you.

Since World War II military psychologists, sociologists and historians—most notably the army historian S.L.A. Marshall, who interviewed hundreds of combat veterans in the Pacific theater—have agreed that soldiers fight not for justice, democracy or other grand ideas but for the guy next to them. Unit cohesion is the real glue holding the US military together.

"I remember they had this formation to tell us we were going to Iraq," recalls Fernando Braga, a skinny, unassuming 23-year-old Iraq vet who is still enlisted in the New York National Guard. Braga, now a poet and student at CUNY's Hunter College, says he became politicized well before the war, when he helped his immigrant mother clean rich people's homes. "My company is really anti-authoritarian. Guys would regularly skip formations and insult the NCOs. So I thought nobody would go. But, like, everybody went!"

And since everybody went, so did Braga. "I had to go. I wasn't going to leave these guys."

It's worth recalling how badly military discipline broke down during the later stages of the Vietnam War, because those traumas shaped the thinking of today's military leadership and guided a wide array of important military reforms.

At the heart of the matter was the draft, which provoked a massive counterreaction that swelled the ranks of the peace movement but also salted the military with disgruntled troops whose increasingly disobedient ethos spread to many volunteers as well. By 1970 whole companies refused to go into combat, and enlisted men started "fragging"—that is, killing—their officers. Drug use and bad attitudes were rampant (Fort Hood, Texas, became known as Fort Head).

The group Vietnam Veterans Against the War staged dozens of protests. One action was a threatening and theatrical "search and destroy mission" that ran from Morristown, New Jersey, to Valley Forge, Pennsylvania. When Nixon invaded Cambodia, the VVAW invaded DC in what the radical vets mockingly called "a limited incursion into the country of Congress." The culmination of it all was the Winter Soldier hearings, in which vets documented US war crimes.

Ending the draft excised much of the disgruntled element from the ranks, and by professionalizing the services, it has helped create a deepening military–civilian divide. Within today's all-volunteer military there is much more intense solidarity than during the Vietnam era. After Vietnam the military also improved its housing, wages, benefits, food and training; it reached out to the families of soldiers and modernized its disciplinary systems and promotions methods, all of which improved morale.

Another key difference between this war and Vietnam is the use of whole-unit rotations as opposed to individual rotations. In Vietnam a soldier was dropped into a unit for 365 days and then, if he survived, plucked out. In Iraq and Afghanistan, battalions (500 to 800 soldiers) train together, deploy together and come home together. During Vietnam the constant flow of men in and out of line companies fighting the war seriously undermined unit cohesion and camaraderie.

"When I showed up in Vietnam we were just parceled out to different platoons as they needed us. I was called the FNG when I showed up—the fucking new guy," remembers David Cline, a legendary activist and driving force within Veterans for Peace. "These kids today face a very different set of pressures."

Is a Vietnam-style collapse of military discipline imminent? Some peace activists think so, pointing to the estimated 400 US military deserters who have made their way to Canada, twenty of whom have applied for asylum, and the roughly 9,000 military personnel who have failed to report for duty since the war began (not all of them have been classified as deserters). Recruiting numbers, meanwhile, have flatlined.

Ending the draft excised much of the disgruntled element from the ranks, and it has deepened the military–civilian divide.

Yet while today's military certainly faces a crisis of quantity, it does not have the Vietnam-era problem with quality.

During the Vietnam War the military had a sufficient number of troops—500,000 in country for much of the war. The problem was qualitative: low morale, rebellion, combat refusal, drug abuse, a crisis of conscience. Today's military is not falling apart Nam-style. Rather, it faces a crisis of size: Though expensive and hardware-heavy, the military is simply too small for the jobs at hand, and it is incapable of growing because too few recruits are joining up and too many veteran soldiers are leaving.

Despite growing cynicism about the Iraq War, indications are that morale, never super-high during prolonged combat, is not particularly low. Likewise, US training and equipment is among the best in the world. But 150,000 soldiers in Iraq, and 16,000 in Afghanistan—many on their second or even third deployment—is simply not enough. When one looks at special categories like translators, civil affairs and intelligence specialists, the staffing shortage becomes even more acute. Thus the small professional army remains disciplined and functional, while the "battle spaces" around it—Anbar province in Iraq or Kunar province in Afghanistan—spin out of control.

We hear often about the "economic draft"—the financial pressures that force young people to join the military. But there is also what could be called an "alienation draft" or, conversely, a "solidarity draft." The military offers not only jobs but also a type of belonging. "The military is like family, for a lot of people," says one vet. In many ways, the US military is a uniquely straightforward institution. Unlike society as a whole, it doesn't pretend to be a democracy—it's a hierarchy and makes no bones about that, but as such, it contains checks and balances, an appeals process and clear paths forward for promotion.

"The US military has one of the best affirmative action programs in the country," says Stan Goff, a twenty-six-year veteran of the US Special Forces, including the ultra-secret Delta Force. On the march to New Orleans, the rugged and compact Goff is playing the role of sergeant major, rallying the sleepyhead vets

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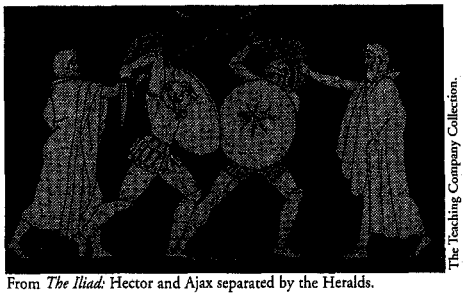

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Dr. Garrett G. Fagan is an Associate Professor in Classics and Ancient Mediterranean Studies and History at The Pennsylvania State University. A native of Dublin, Ireland, he received his Ph.D. in Roman Studies at McMaster University. Professor Fagan's main research interest is Roman social history. His articles have appeared in international journals, and he is the author of *Bathing in Public in the Roman World* (1999).

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for the morning briefings, setting the tempo, always moving. "The other thing about the Army is that it's fair. If you know the regs you can work the system." Goff also points out that the highest-paid military general makes only about fourteen times what the lowest-paid grunt earns—compare that with private-sector pay discrepancies that reach ratios of 700 to 1.

Of course, other vets have stories of racism and broken promises. Demond Mullins is a New York National Guardsman, dance teacher and City University of New York college student who returned from Iraq only six months ago and is now active with IVAW. Mullins is embittered not only about losing a close friend in Iraq and seeing twenty-five others from his battalion wounded and almost getting killed himself when his Humvee hit a homemade bomb; he's also angry at being skipped over for promotion because he is black and about being lied to by his recruiter. "They still haven't given me any money for college."

Such stories aside, there are many ways the military avoids the intense racial and class segregation that marks much of American life. And the armed forces mix people of many different backgrounds.

"The military is one of the only places in America where black people routinely boss around white people," says Braga with a mischievous grin. Another white middle-class vet from the rural South once described to me how his "battle buddy," or assigned partner, in basic training was an ex-hoodlum who had been a homeless street kid in Mexico. "The dude was covered with scars from knife fights. I mean, where else would I have spent every waking minute with that guy, or he with me?"

This egalitarian mingling and the intense camaraderie, plus decent pay, housing for family and constant training opportunities, can make military life look a lot better than the atomized, segregated, economically stagnant world outside. And all of this creates a deep-seated sense of loyalty to the military, even among those who oppose its wars.

On the other hand, Cline, Braga and other activist vets all point out that unit cohesion can cut two ways: It works like Kryptonite to stop rebellion, but after a tipping point unit cohesion can serve to make rebellion even more intense.

To illustrate the point, Braga recalls the story of the 343rd Quartermaster Company, from Rock Hill, South Carolina. In October 2004 this Army Reserve unit (Braga worked alongside them at times) refused what they called a "suicide mission" to deliver fuel in a convoy of old, unarmored trucks. Eighteen drivers from the 343rd were arrested, but the media storm that followed—a whole company had openly refused orders!—helped pressure the military into delivering armor and retrofitting its trucks and Humvees. Similarly, when Reppenhagen the sniper joined IVAW, his spotter, the guy he'd spent a year with in Iraq, also joined—they remained a team.

The rebellion of the 343rd also pointed out the pragmatism of resistance. "Hey, protesting could save your life," says Braga. "I've seen it happen. The 343rd and that soldier who asked Rumsfeld that question about the body armor, those two things got the military to pay attention and buy decent armor."

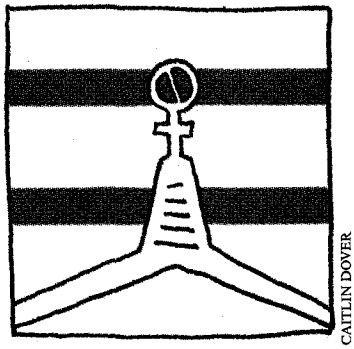
If 1960s activism was fueled by disillusioned outrage, then today's activism is fettered by a type of world-weary cynicism. Braga says most of the guys in his unit assume the war is based on lies and that it's all about oil, but they won't get involved in peace activism because "They say, 'You can't change anything.' But if you read history you see that usually people already have changed things," he says. "Movements have made lots of things happen." ■

RELATIONS BETWEEN JEWS AND MAINLINE PROTESTANTS HAVE GROWN INCREASINGLY TESTY.

The Israel Divestment Debate

HASDAI WESTBROOK

This past September, ten days after the last Israeli soldier left the Gaza Strip as part of Ariel Sharon's disengagement plan, an unusual meeting took place in East Jerusalem. Seventeen representatives from various American Jewish organizations and from several American Protestant denominations filed in to the headquarters of Sabeel—a Palestinian "liberation theology center" headed by Palestinian Christian activist Rev. Naim Ateek, whose activities had become a source of intense controversy among his guests. Rabbi Gary Bretton-Granatoor of the Anti-Defamation League confronted Ateek on his position that he did not accept Israel's right to exist. Ateek refused to repudiate it, quoting an Israeli writer's statement that if the Jewish people had a right to a homeland it should be in Germany, not Palestine. Bretton-Granatoor and other Jewish leaders pressed Ateek on his writings, accusing him of anti-Semitism in speaking of the Israeli government as "Herods" and of its "crucifixion" of Palestinians. Ateek brushed the suggestion aside, claiming that his use of biblical imagery in the struggle against oppression was justified. As the debate grew more heated, the American Christian leaders remained silent, watching Ateek and their Jewish counterparts trade accusations.



CAITLIN DOVER

The contentious meeting at Sabeel was the last stop on a trip to Israel and Palestine intended to mend fences between American Jews and mainstream Protestant denominations. The trip

Hasdai Westbrook is a contributing editor at The Brooklynite *and a former editor of* New Voices *magazine. His writing has appeared in* The American Prospect *and the* Washington Post.

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came after more than a year of hostility between the traditional communal allies over an increasingly activist pro-Palestinian stance among mainline Christians, and particularly over their moves toward divestment from companies profiting from the occupation of the Palestinian territories captured by Israel in 1967. The controversy began in July 2004, when the Presbyterian Church (USA) voted to adopt a policy of divestment from such companies and other companies doing business with Israel, prompting outrage from the mainstream Jewish community. By the time of the interfaith trip, the United Church of Christ (UCC) had adopted a similar policy and the Episcopal, Methodist and Lutheran denominations were seriously considering doing the same.

Advocates for Palestinian rights argue that divestment is an effective tool to protest Israel's policies where previous actions have failed, putting pressure on Israel to end the occupation and move toward a peaceful resolution of the conflict. They feel it is well past time for the churches to take a stand and stop deferring to pro-Israel feelings in the Jewish community. Jewish critics and other supporters of Israel argue that it is a thinly veiled attack on Israel's legitimacy as a Jewish state that has no hope of being effective and only creates more hostility. Some leaders of the American Jewish community have even threatened to abandon partnership with mainline Protestants altogether, jeopardizing a longstanding progressive alliance.

Since Israel's capture of the territories in 1967, mainline denominations have become progressively more sympathetic to Palestinian claims.

America's mainline Protestant denominations supported Israel's founding in 1948 and remained supportive of the Jewish state through its early years while building a solid progressive partnership with US Jewish groups on domestic issues such as civil rights and poverty. But since Israel's capture of the West Bank and Gaza in 1967, these denominations have become progressively more critical of the occupation and ever more sympathetic to Palestinian claims.

This shift did not escape the attention of Israel's government and of US Jewish organizations, which in the early 1970s began cultivating evangelical Christian support for Israel. Informed by an "end time" theology in which Christ's return, the Apocalypse and the Last Judgment are contingent on an "ingathering of the exiles"—the Jewish people—to biblical Israel, the increasingly powerful evangelical movement saw the state's creation and its victory in the 1967 war as fulfillments of prophecy. For Israel and its US Jewish supporters, these "Christian Zionists" quickly became an attractive alternative to mainline denominations.

With the collapse of the peace process in 2000, evangelicals and American Jewish groups rushed to defend Israel's efforts to suppress the second intifada. Even American Jewish groups that had long fought the Christian right on domestic issues, such as the Anti-Defamation League, eagerly embraced Christian Zionists. As Israel faced its "greatest crisis in years," ADL director Abe Foxman declared, "American Jews should not be apologetic or defensive about cultivating Evangelical support."

As anger at Israeli military incursions and settlement-building grew, however, the conflict produced an upsurge in pro-Palestinian activism as well. From its headquarters in Geneva, the World Council of Churches (WCC), an ecumenical body to which all American mainline denominations belong, launched a campaign dedicated to putting "an end to the occupation as a means of addressing the root causes of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict." Central to the campaign is the Ecumenical Accompaniment Program in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI), which recruits church members to "accompany Palestinians and Israelis in non-violent actions and concerted advocacy efforts to end the occupation."

Overseen in America by the Lutheran Church, EAPPI has sent a steady stream of volunteers to witness the brutalities and humiliations of Israeli occupation. These volunteers have built relationships with Jewish anti-occupation groups like Rabbis for Human Rights and the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions and with Palestinian Christian organizations like Sabeel. Links like these led the Presbyterian Church's general assembly to pass, with overwhelming support, the July 2004 resolution identifying Israel's occupation as "the root of evil acts committed against innocent people on both sides of the conflict" and calling for a policy of "phased selective divestment" from companies that do business in Israel. It also passed resolutions to "actively oppose Christian Zionism" and condemning Israel's construction of its separation wall.

The response from Jewish groups was swift and furious. The ADL said the move was "offensive and distressing," and B'nai B'rith denounced it as "hostile, aggressive, and profoundly insulting," calling for an end to interfaith dialogue. Rabbis for Human Rights—a participant in EAPPI that has engaged in civil disobedience to prevent Israeli authorities from demolishing Palestinian homes and orchards—excoriated the Presbyterians for singling out Israel while ignoring "the homicidal ideologies that have so sadly taken hold among some of our Palestinian neighbors" and the "attempts to destroy our country that transcend the Occupation and precede it by decades."

Americans for Peace Now and Brit Tzedek v'Shalom, America's largest Jewish peace groups, rejected divestment as counterproductive, and leaders of the Reform movement—the largest American Jewish denomination, with approximately 1.5 million members and a stalwart progressive constituency—requested a face-to-face meeting with Presbyterian leaders to discuss their differences. "It was just this past June that you met with Colin Powell along with [Reform leaders] to discuss real actions that the U.S. should be taking to support peace," protested Union for Reform Judaism president Eric Yoffie. "That spirit of cooperation is now put into question."

Reeling from the backlash, Presbyterian leaders sought to cast the divestment action in more conciliatory terms, but this did little to mollify critics. By the time the Rev. Clifton Kirkpatrick, chief ecclesiastical officer of the PC(USA)'s general assembly, met with Jewish leaders that September, his office had received protests from fourteen House members and six senators urging him to overturn the divestment decision, which they argued only encouraged those who sought to delegitimize the Jewish state.

(Continued on Page 28)

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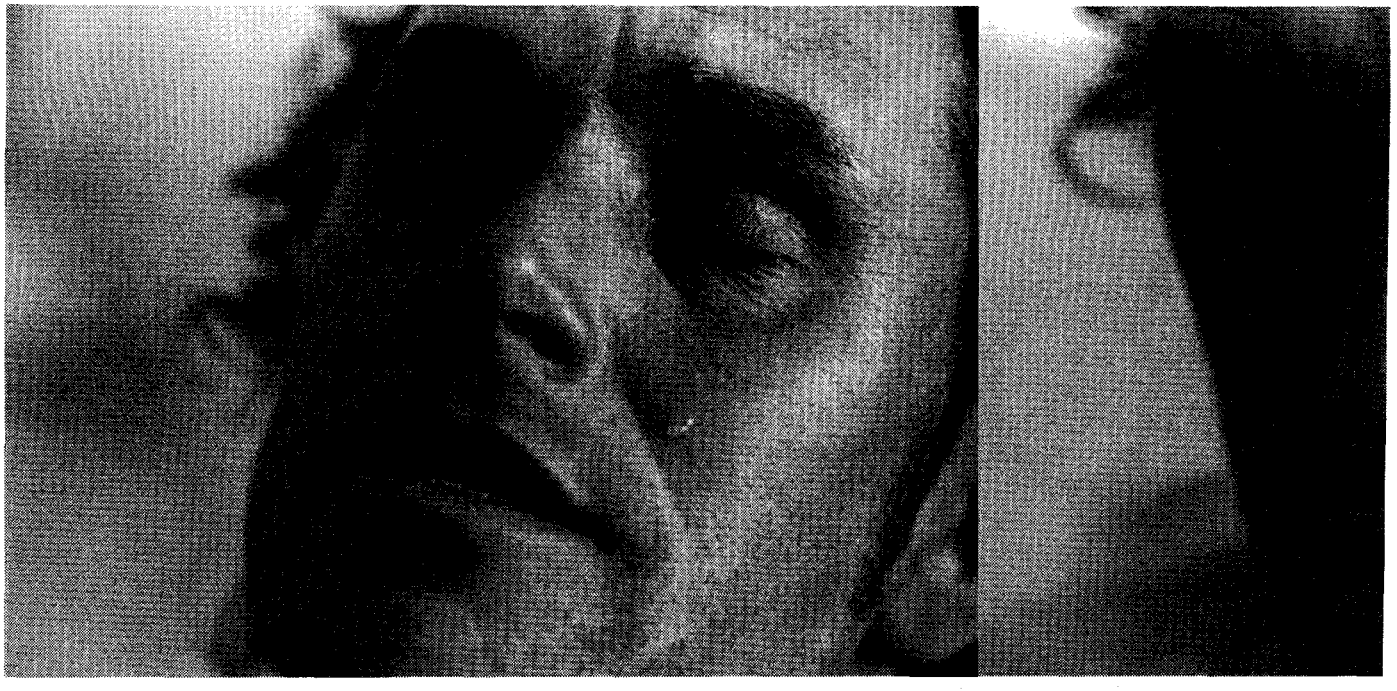
War Is Personal: Carlos Arredondo/Age



"I remember the war in Nicaragua in the 1980s, the *contra* scandal, the weapons for hostages. Oliver North took the blame for Ronald Reagan. I remember when a bomb blew up in Beirut and kill about 200 Marines. I watch them on the TV, searching for them, carrying the bodies out on stretchers, pieces of them. And what I learned of Vietnam in my country? I never understood what they was fighting for. Costa Rica, it was my home when I was a boy, and we had the same climate, same weather, and I was afraid the United States would someday come to Costa Rica and do the same thing. So, when my son told me at age 17 that he was going to join the service, I said, "Oh, no," and he said, "Don't worry, Dad."

His mother knew the whole time. Then they told me last, I guess because they know how I was feeling. The Marines had an office in the high school and the recruiters know everything, know who comes from divided families, especially when the father's not around. They offer Alex thousands of dollars for signing up and help with college. Though we share custody, one parent can sign. His mother sign the paper. From that moment on, of course, I support my son. I had US Marine bumper stickers on my car, flags in my home, letting people know, even though I didn't want him to go.

Alex went to basic training in California, then more training. Then, because he wasn't being told anything by the military, he began asking me for information about the Middle East, about what the President is saying. Next thing I know, my son is being made ready for urban combat. Next thing he's on the way to Kuwait, on the way to Iraq, and I'm here at home learning that there's no nuclear armaments there, there's none of them. I'm starting to learn all this, and my son is on the way there.

So much happen. I have two TVs at the same time, the radio on. I can't go to sleep. I've been married with Mel seven years, working as a bus driver, part time, sometimes a landscaper and painter, but I can't go to work, because I want to know what happen. I was worried, very worried, by reading all the newspapers and concentrating too

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45/Roslindale, Massachusetts

much on the war on the TV. I see how my son got from here to Iraq, see them prepare for invasion, see sandstorms, they reach the Tigris River, and two Marines got killed there, and my son was traveling inside a tank that was very noisy, a lot of fuel smells. All along I see the minister of information for Saddam Hussein on TV say, "I'm going to kill all of them." I see all the sadness, see how they kill, see how the Marines move through the dark alleyways, kick doors, blindfold people, while afraid most of the time for snipers and bombs. I was all the time calling the Marines and the Red Cross, asking them about the situation. I hear nothing about my son for days and days. It was too much, too much, too much for parents.

Next thing I know, I see soldiers rolling into Baghdad, people at the side of the road saying hello, welcome, and I was very happy. And I say, "Thank God." The statue go down, they catch Saddam, and I see the President of the US landing on the air carrier with big signs saying, "Mission Accomplished." And I say, "Oh my God, it's over. The war is over."

The 25th of August in 2004 was the day of my birthday, and I was expecting a phone call from Alex, which he never miss, to say, "Happy Birthday, Dad." My mother start baking a cake, and I was working outside with my cell phone in my pocket when I saw the Marines get off the van. Thought it was a surprise, and my happiness was overwhelming. Next thing, the Marines ask me if I was Carlos Arredondo. I don't understand why they asking me that, and I don't see my son anywhere. I even ask them, "Are you guys here to recruit some kids?" because I have a second son, a 16-year-old, Brian. And he said, "I'm sorry, I'm coming to notify you that Alexander Arredondo got killed in combat." At that moment, not expecting those words, my world tumbled and I felt my heart go down to the ground and rush up through my throat. I run from my house to the backyard, looking for my mother to tell her what these men were saying. And she run to try to talk to them, while I was trying to call Maine to reach Alex's mother. Brian answer the phone and because I was in tears, all I could say was, "Sorry, I'm sorry. They're telling me

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your brother got killed." And Brian said, "I know that, I know." "How do you know that?" "'Cause the Marines, they're here right now, and when I saw them coming, I know."

I run back into the house, grab Alex's picture to give it to my mom. Then seeing the uniforms, ask the Marines to please leave, leave. "Can you please leave." Perhaps I thought that if they did leave, then none of this was happening. I ask God to help me, then call my wife, who was working down the street. And again I ask the Marines to leave, to leave the house. When they answer that they are waiting for my wife, I went into the garage and got a hammer. After asking them to leave again, I walk toward the van, wanting to smash it, all the time hearing the Marines telling me, "Sir, don't do that, don't do that," and my mother yelling in Spanish, "Carlos, Carlos, we've already lost Alex." My head full of confusion, asking myself what's going on, what's going on, I pounded the hammer hard into the ground, then went behind a tree to cry when I think to call Alex's recruiter, Sergeant Martinez. I have his telephone number in my phone. I call him, explain that I'm Alex's father and ask him to please help me, the Marines are telling me Alex has died. The voice on the other side say, "Sir, sir, you've got the wrong number." I look and the phone say "Sergeant Martinez." Pretty sure it was Sergeant Martinez's voice. I call him back again, and again he hung up on me.

I got so angry I go to my garage and get a five-gallon can of gasoline that I keep for my lawn mower, also a torch like they use for welding. And with one in each hand, I once again ask the Marines to leave my house. And they… I don't really remember what was the answer, but they didn't move. So I approach the van, pick up the hammer, bang at that window so hard I cut my arms. When my mother pull the gasoline can away I chase her, got it back, open the van door, begin banging everything inside the van—the computer, the dashboard, the seats, the roof. I couldn't find my son. I was screaming for my son when I threw everything, everything from the van. When I have nothing else to throw, I found the five gallons of gasoline and began pouring it everywhere, everywhere. I was splashing my body,

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my legs, my clothing. And there was my mother, screaming, the Marines outside the van, talking the whole time on the phone, the fumes that were so strong I couldn't breathe, though the windows were broken.

I am with one leg out of the van, holding the acetylene torch, with my mother pulling at me, when I lose my balance. But what happens was I press the button, which ignite the torch. Next thing was an explosion that threw me out with a lot of fire, and I was falling head down on the ground in flames. And not knowing yet what happen to my mom, I run across the street, until one of the Marines jump on top of me, on my back. And I was screaming, "Momma, Momma, Momma," because my socks, my feet, my shirt were burning. As they dragged me away from the van something blew up. A big bang. And I continue screaming, yelling for my son Alex. "Are you sure that was Alex? Are you sure?"

The day of my son Alex's wake, I was on a stretcher because of the burns. On morphine, so I don't remember many people. I remember hugs, shaking hands. And I remember waiting outside of the funeral home for my ex-wife for two hours, not wanting to see my son's body by myself. When I first approach the casket, I thought it might be hard to recognize him, because we had not been told yet what killed him. We hadn't learn yet that he had a wound in the temple of his head, so that he had a three-inch-wide hole in back of his head. But it was him. And seeing him laying flat in a casket, I thought, he's not breathing and that he looks a little different, a little older. That his hair is a little bit longer. Wanting to reach him I was lifted off the stretcher and climb up to kiss him, to touch his head, his hands, his fingers, his shoulders, his legs, to see if they were still there. I lay on top of the casket, on top of my son, apologizing to him because I did nothing for him to avoid this moment. Nothing.

Photographs and interview by Eugene Richards

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(Continued From Page 23)

"It is the occupation, not our move to consider divestment, that threatens the existence of Israel," Kirkpatrick retorted. The meeting with Jewish leaders produced little agreement.

"What we saw emerge very dramatically following the divestment decision of the Presbyterians is a certain mentality that says the occupation is the root of all evil," says Yoffie. "We just don't agree with that." More fundamentally, says Yoffie, that mindset often minimizes terrorism. "They are very quick to use the word 'evil' when they apply it to the occupation, but they didn't apply the word 'evil' to terror.... There's simply no moral calculus that could reasonably lead to that conclusion."

Shortly afterward, the Episcopal Church moved closer to adopting divestment, announcing that its Social Responsibility Investment Committee would study whether investments are "appropriate with companies that contribute to the ongoing [Israeli] Occupation." At the same time, PC(USA)'s Mission Responsibility Through Investment (MRTI) committee published divestment guidelines but again took pains to present the policy as evenhanded. While the original resolution called for phased selective divestment from companies doing business in Israel, the guidelines now only targeted companies that profited from Israel's occupation, adding the category of corporations that aided Israeli or Palestinian organizations "that support or facilitate violent acts against innocent civilians."

'What we saw...is a certain mentality that says the occupation is the root of all evil. We just don't agree with that.' —Rabbi Eric Yoffie

In October, however, during a fact-finding trip to the Middle East, the Presbyterian Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy, which drafted the divestment resolution, met with Sheik Nabil Kaouk, a leader of Lebanon's Hezbollah, which has been labeled a terrorist organization by the State Department. "We treasure the precious words of Hezbollah," Presbyterian elder Ron Stone told his hosts during the meeting, which was broadcast on Hezbollah's Al Manar satellite television network. "According to my recent experience," added Stone, "relations and conversations with Islamic leaders are a lot easier than dealings and dialogue with Jewish leaders." In the face of an outcry from Jewish groups, the Presbyterian leadership quickly disavowed the meeting and Stone's comments. The Advisory Committee's coordinator was subsequently fired.

This controversy aside, however, some American Jews support divestment. "It's about time that these Christian organizations came on board," says Cecilie Surasky of Jewish Voices for Peace (JVP), which strongly endorses the divestment campaign. The Presbyterians, says Surasky, broke an "unwritten rule." "They are allowed to issue statements that are critical of the Israeli government, but they're not allowed to actually do something."

What effect divestment will have, however, is unclear. Mainline leaders concede that they do not own enough stock to leverage corporations or Israel into changing policies. "We don't have the millions of people to make a profound economic impact," says Surasky. "Our goal is education of both American Jews and Christians.... Because of [the Presbyterian] action and the resulting backlash, you're seeing panels at churches and soul-searching on an unprecedented level." But while some Jewish organizations like JVP and Jews Against the Occupation support divestment, Yoffie says they are "fringe groups" and says "there are no legitimate mainstream Jewish groups that support the divestment effort." Indeed, a United Church of Christ briefing paper conceded that pro-divestment Jewish groups were not representative of the mainstream Jewish community.

For Jeff Halper, head of the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions and an American-born Israeli Jew, that's precisely the problem. Even liberal Jews like Yoffie and groups like Americans for Peace Now are obstacles to peace, he says. "Both the liberals and the super-pro-Israel people see themselves as the gatekeepers of Israel. They resist criticism of Israel and of course criticism from Christians, even progressive Christians.... Liberal Jews are critical of Israel in a general way, but when it comes to taking a real stand, for example with divestment—saying, 'Look, this occupation is evil'—they tend not to go there."

"There" would mean accepting the assertion that Israel's occupation is primarily responsible for the conflict and therefore the major obstacle to peace, and that America enables Israel's intransigence. "For thirty years the Presbyterian Church has been asking Israel to stop settlements and appealing to the US government to put curbs on Israel. There's been zero change," says Presbyterian Donald Wagner, executive director of the Center for Middle Eastern Studies at North Park University in Chicago and a prominent advocate for divestment. "It's time to say that we are not going to benefit from another people's suffering." Divestment may not prevent Caterpillar from selling bulldozers to Israel or hurt the country's economy, proponents concede, but it might mobilize outrage against Israel's actions, leading to pressure to end the occupation. "Sanctions on South Africa created a moral environment in which apartheid got so delegitimized that companies didn't want to be associated with it," says Halper. "That's the way I think Christians can have an influence. You can delegitimize the occupation to a point where it would have to change, where Israel is so isolated it'll become a pariah."

Jewish Voices for Peace hailed the Presbyterian divestment decision as "the first in what may soon be a torrent of church-based activism." Indeed, in February 2005 the WCC commended PC(USA) and encouraged member churches to adopt similar measures. That same month, the UCC published a draft resolution for a "process of divestment from companies involved with Israel's illegal occupations of the West Bank and Gaza, the building of the 'security fence,' and the Israeli settlements within Palestinian Territory." And in June the New England and Virginia Conferences of the United Methodist Church voted to urge their denomination to do the same.

In spring 2005 Israeli Ambassador Daniel Ayalon summoned officials from several US Jewish organizations to express his concern. "The Israelis wanted to know what the Americans were doing and whether they could 'control' the divestment threat," says Rabbi Eugene Korn, director of Jewish affairs for the American Jewish Congress. After a furious round of lobby-

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ing, Jewish leaders convinced UCC officials not to recommend divestment to its synod floor. And yet at the July synod, the UCC approved a resolution to "use economic leverage, including...divesting from those companies that refuse to change their practices of gain from the perpetuation of violence, including the Occupation." Several Jewish groups said they were abandoning dialogue for a more confrontational approach, charging that the mainline had been co-opted by groups like Sabeel and swearing to expose how Sabeel's message conflicts with the mainline groups' stated commitment to a two-state solution. Mainline leaders are "trying to accommodate this deeply anti-Zionist theology with their fine American position that they support the right of Israel to exist in safety and security," says Korn. "You cannot square the circle." Sabeel's "Principles for a Just Peace in Palestine-Israel" does state that "the ideal and best solution has always been to envisage ultimately a bi-national state in Palestine-Israel." PC(USA) Middle East liaison Victor Makari shares this vision, telling the *Jerusalem Report* that his "preferred solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a shared democratic state."

As with South Africa, sanctions against Israel 'can delegitimize the occupation to a point where it would have to change,' says Jeff Halper.

Divestment proponents say that for Jewish leaders to cry foul over alliances with Palestinian Christians who allegedly reject Israel's legitimacy and a two-state solution is hypocritical, given their own alliance with Christian Zionists who reject the legitimacy of Palestinian claims to any part of what they consider Jewish land. "The institutional alliances with groups both Jewish and Christian, from the Zionist Organization of America to Pat Robertson, that reject out of hand the right of Palestinians to have their own state, are simply never questioned," says Surasky.

Indeed, evangelicals have supplied much of the firepower against divestment. The controversy over the UCC's actions marked the first time that Christian Zionists came into direct confrontation with their mainline brethren over Israel. Soon after the UCC's draft resolutions were published, the International Fellowship of Christians and Jews, through its Stand for Israel project (co-founded by former Christian Coalition director Ralph Reed), launched a petition drive urging their rejection. The fellowship, which is primarily supported by evangelical Christians, also launched a broader "Stop Divestment" movement, boasting of thousands of signatures collected for petitions directed at mainline denominations and of 20,000 faxes sent to George W. Bush countering "anti-Israel" lobbying by mainline groups.

The anti-divestment campaign intensified last August when PC(USA)'s MRTI committee published its list of targets for possible divestment. All save one were companies allegedly aiding Israel's military occupation, including Caterpillar and Motorola (the exception was Citigroup, which it was claimed had provided money to the families of Palestinian suicide bombers through an investment fund). Stand for Israel quickly joined the American Jewish Congress in calling for investment in the target companies. The AJCongress even bought stock in Caterpillar so as to oppose a shareholder resolution brought by JVP and PC(USA) urging the company to cease supplying the Israel Defense Forces with bulldozers used to demolish Palestinian homes. The resolution was overwhelmingly defeated.

On August 11 Reform Judaism leader Eric Yoffie addressed the mainline Evangelical Lutheran Church of America's assembly. Yoffie acknowledged the pain of Palestinians and reaffirmed his commitment to a two-state solution but implored Christians not to disregard the impact of terror or to blame Israel alone for the conflict. He received a standing ovation from the delegates, who adopted a "Peace Not Walls" policy aimed at raising awareness of the separation barrier's impact on Palestinians, but endorsing "constructive investment" through such initiatives as loans to Palestinian businesses rather than divestment. In October the Episcopal Church decided to "engage in dialogue with and, where appropriate, to file shareholder resolutions" with companies that operate in the occupied territories and "whose products or services contribute to violence against either side, or contribute to the infrastructure that supports and sustains the Occupation," but stressed that it was not endorsing divestment.

Jewish groups welcomed the Episcopal and Lutheran decisions. The ADL credited its efforts and those of other Jewish organizations to engage mainline leaders in dialogue aimed at preventing the use of economic sanctions against Israel. Ethan Felson, assistant director of the Jewish Council for Public Affairs, told *The Jewish Week* that the Episcopalian decision was a "turning point" that would make it easier to derail similar proposals. Korn credits the apparent rejection of divestment to the September interfaith trip, including the meeting at Sabeel. "[Mainline leaders] saw for the first time that the conflict is not black and white, and they can't simply blame Israel for everything," he says. Israel's Gaza disengagement in August may also have helped to stall the momentum for divestment. "It has given Jewish communal organizations a good talking point to say, 'See, Israel does support peace, they disengaged from Gaza,'" says Surasky. "For those who have superficial knowledge of the issues, it does seem like Israel took a step toward peace."

In early December the Democratic National Committee unanimously resolved to condemn divestment from Israel, stating, "Efforts to isolate Israel through boycotts or actions that include the possibility of divestment are counterproductive to the search for peace." Jewish anti-divestment activists had strenuously lobbied DNC chair Howard Dean to take action, and the language was crafted with the help of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, the Jewish Council for Public Affairs and the National Jewish Democratic Council.

"The life cycle of this movement is years, not months," says Surasky. "It's laughable for anyone to declare victory at this point." The Rev. Richard Toll, chair of Friends of Sabeel North America, says that while the Lutheran and Episcopal denominations might seem to have rejected divestment, they have in essence endorsed the movement. "They didn't use the word 'divestment'; that's the trigger word that has gotten people all excited. I'm sure they felt the backlash.

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But the Episcopal Church has a very similar plan [to that of PC(USA)].... The Lutherans, all the preachers, are saying the same thing as the Presbyterians—that they don't think it's right for anyone to make money off the occupation."

Indeed, the future of divestment as a tactic is very much an open question. In early February the Church of England's general synod voted for "morally responsible investment in the Palestinian occupied territories and, in particular, to disinvest from companies profiting from the illegal occupation, such as Caterpillar Inc." Though not binding on the church's investment committee, the vote carries tremendous symbolic power and was supported by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Rowan Williams, leader of the worldwide Anglican Communion. Jewish condemnation was swift, however, and former Archbishop of Canterbury Lord Carey of Clifton announced that he was "ashamed to be an Anglican."

Prospects for divestment in US churches are still uncertain. The United Methodist Church is "monitoring the situation closely" and may revise its position at its next general conference. And at its next general assembly, in June, the Presbyterian Church will decide whether to retain its own divestment policy, with critics claiming that to do so it would also have to divest from companies doing business with the Palestinian Authority under the newly elected Hamas government. In late February, after heated debate and an embarrassing furor over its officials attending another meeting with Hezbollah in Lebanon, the Presbytery of Chicago voted to send an overture to the general assembly urging PC(USA) to invest its assets only in "peaceful pursuits" as they "pertain to Israel, Gaza, East Jerusalem, and the West Bank," but avoided using the word "divestment." "As long as the Presbyterians are still carrying the banner, there's still a threat," says Rabbi Korn. "But the pushback has been so strong. The Presbyterians are hanging out there by themselves. The others have backed off for moral and pragmatic reasons. They couldn't deal with the headache."

But while Jewish leaders may be confident that their efforts to neutralize the divestment campaign have been successful, recent events have exposed the risks and contradictions of the alliance with evangelicals that was instrumental to that success. In January, shortly after Ariel Sharon suffered a debilitating stroke, Christian Coalition founder Pat Robertson provoked outrage by suggesting that Sharon's predicament was divine retribution for giving up Jewish land. "God has enmity against those who 'divide my land,'" Robertson explained on his television program, *The 700 Club*. "I would say woe unto any prime minister of Israel who takes a similar course."

The previous month Abe Foxman of the ADL held a summit with the Reform movement's Eric Yoffie and other Jewish leaders to devise a strategy for confronting the political power of conservative Christian groups, declaring evangelical influence a threat to Jewish life in America. Other Jewish leaders such as Korn have counseled against confrontation for fear that it might threaten the pro-Israel relationship at a time when mainline groups have become so hostile. Some prominent evangelicals have already begun to make veiled threats to this effect. Other threats have not been so veiled. "You know, [Foxman]'s got himself kind of in a bind, because the strongest supporters Israel has are members of the religious right, the people he's fighting," the Rev. Donald Wildmon, founder and chairman of the American Family Association—one of the groups Foxman has singled out—told his audience during a December 5 broadcast on AFA-operated American Family Radio. "The more he says that 'you people are destroying this country,' you know, some people are going to begin to get fed up with this and say, 'Well, all right then. If that's the way you feel, then we just won't support Israel anymore.'" ■

LETTERS
CONTINUED

(Continued From Page 2)

My book criticizes boomer liberals. *The Nation* had it reviewed by a boomer liberal. Anybody surprised at the outcome? For Jacoby, it's apparently a crime that I find intellectual conferences and magazines interesting; that I include him in the group I criticize; that I discuss black intellectuals (you won't find anything in Jacoby's books about them). He misses the irony in my account of living-wage activism at UVa and in my comments on Mark Crispin Miller. His piece offers not one example of the kind of ideas he prefers to mine. The whole thing reads like a textbook example of anti-intellectualism in American life. What a relief to be spared a *good* review from Russell Jacoby. ERIC LOTT

JACOBY REPLIES

Los Angeles

■ I am thankful for Karin Coddon's words; I'm sorry the university drives people like her away.

I am "pleased" that Eric Lott "enjoyed" my "critique." I also "enjoyed" his "book," which sought both to slay boomer liberals for their sellout politics and lionize cultural studies professors for their fearless theories. While Lott bravely identified his militant colleagues by name, he was unable to identify their politics. Consider his ringing conclusion: "If patriotism itself is rethought as 'plural, serial, contextual, and mobile,' in Apparadurai's words, then postnationalist collectives of labor and desire might earn the devotion they deserve. Let us be for the freedom of transnations." Nicely said. His "book" bespeaks a narcissistic world of academic back-patting and *faux* radicalism. He now claims I miss his irony. I plead guilty. He also states that to attack his book is to be anti-intellectual. I would think it the reverse: To praise his book is to surrender thinking for hype and jargon. Here is an example of thought à la Lott: "As Linda Zerilli observes in a remarkable diacritics essay, universalism's comeback follows the perceived political inadequacy of postmodern theory—with its focus on subject position, difference, and new social identities—to draw up any account of any overarching collective or united front."

Actually, I do see irony—another English professor who cannot write English—but no thought. The always intrepid Lott reveals that I teach history and asks "but what am I?" It's a damned good question. RUSSELL JACOBY

ANSWER IS BLOWIN' IN THE WIND

New York City

■ John Nichols, in "Bringing the War Home" [March 27], refers to the April 29 mobilization in New York City. Just to make sure everyone is clear: It is organized by United for Peace and Justice, RainbowPUSH Coalition, National Organization for Women, US Labor Against the War, Friends of the Earth, Peoples Hurricane Relief Fund, Climate Crisis Coalition, National Youth and Student Peace Coalition and Veterans for Peace. ANSWER is not part of the initiating group or the organizing committee. It issued a call to join the demonstration, and by not identifying the organizing groups it's creating confusion. All are welcome to be in the April 29 march, but don't be fooled by ANSWER, or anyone else (www.april29.org; www.unitedforpeace.org). LESLIE CAGAN

United for Peace and Justice

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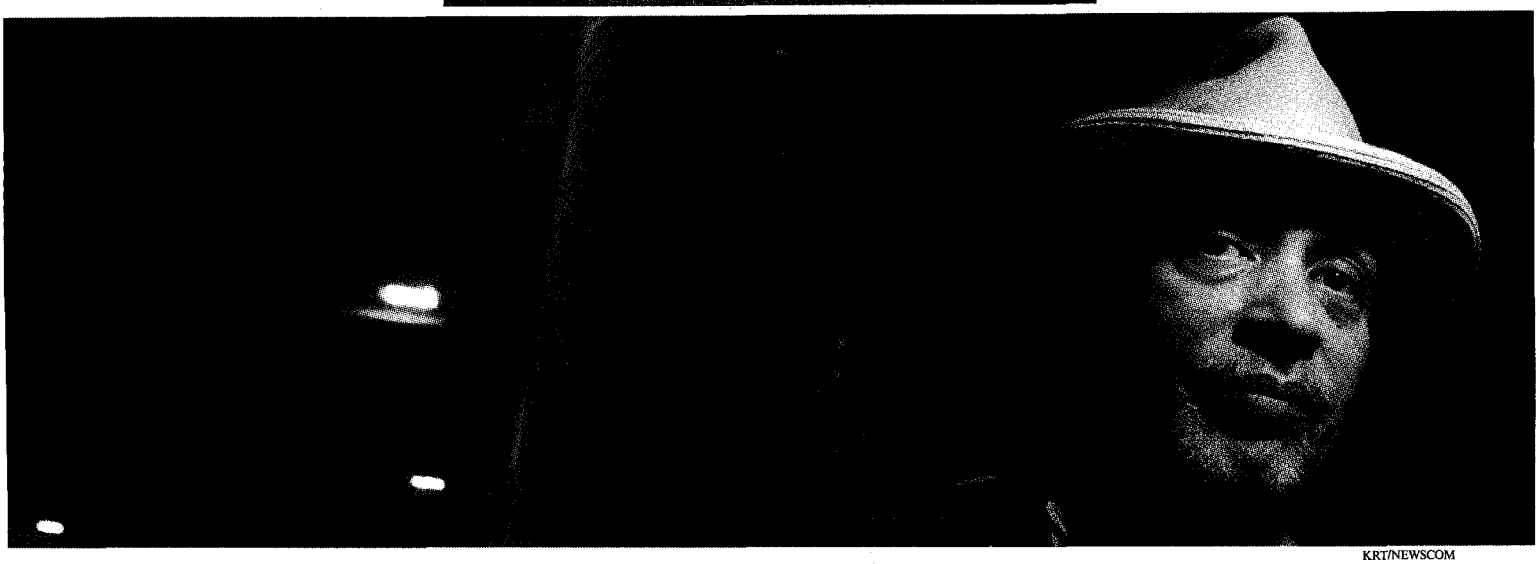
BOOKS & THE ARTS



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A Darker Shade of Noir

ROBERT CHRISTGAU

FORTUNATE SON.
By Walter Mosley.
Little, Brown. 313 pp. $23.95.

Walter Mosley is a 54-year-old former computer programmer with a BA in political science who must live in fear that he took up writing too late. In just sixteen years Mosley has published a mind-boggling twenty-three books: eight detective novels and one story collection featuring his signature character, the African-American sleuth-janitor-landlord Easy Rawlins; a portrait of Rawlins as a young man in East Texas; two lesser detective novels that pair the brainy Paris Minton with the steely Fearless Jones; two sets of linked stories featuring the do-gooding ex-con Socrates Fortlow; two science-fiction novels and one linked science-fiction collection; a science-fiction-tinged historical novel for teens; two political tracts; and three "serious" novels—*RL's Dream*, about a dying bluesman cared for by a young white secretary in New York City; *The Man in My Basement*, about a white fixer-financier who voluntarily imprisons himself in a black drunk's Sag Harbor home; and the brand-new *Fortunate Son*, about intimately connected, diametrically opposed black and white stepbrothers. The past two years have been especially fruitful. After an eight-year drought that produced one Rawlins detective novel, Mosley has brought forth two excellent new ones, *Little Scarlet* and *Cinnamon Kiss*. He's also produced the slavery-themed young-adult *47* and, this year, the sci-fi fantasy *The Wave* and *Fortunate Son*.

Though the literary novels get respect, Mosley's reputation rests mostly on the Rawlins books, as it should. Starting in 1948 and proceeding by multiyear leaps to 1961, *Devil in a Blue Dress*, *A Red Death*, *White Butterfly* and *Black Betty* chronicle a Los Angeles in which the artificial boundaries of de facto segregation are transgressed in disastrous secrecy. In four narrowly spaced subsequent novels, that secrecy starts to dissipate. These eight historically evolving books constitute the finest detective *oeuvre* in American literature, surpassing even that of card-carrying formalist Hammett and dwarfing Chandler and Leonard and Macdonald. Even to an old-fashioned English major with an atavistic craving for greatness in fiction, they're pretty great, applying quick, meaty prose to plots rich in cultural and social detail.

Because Mosley writes to be understood and loves the way the world looks, feels and tastes, he's always a pleasure to read, but the Easy novels go down easiest. That's the attraction of a genre in which one's hunger to find out what happens next defeats the fatigue of reading as a task. In Mosley, however, the pull isn't the mystery—he's not an especially deft plotter, with denouements that turn on racial ambiguities almost as often as Ross Macdonald's turn on skeletons in the closet, and he doesn't play the puzzler's game of dropping hints about whodunit. The fascination isn't who but how

Robert Christgau is senior editor and chief music critic of the Village Voice.

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and why—moral drama in page-turner mode. Easy is a genuinely amateur detective who often finds himself questioning neighbors he knows slightly or well, and Mosley is so interested in these people that his hero hangs out a lot more than professional investigators like Sue Grafton's efficient Kinsey Millhone. Whereas Raymond Chandler's Philip Marlowe looks askance at the sleazy, shallow LA he romanticizes, Mosley feels the struggles and screw-ups of all his black characters and many of his white ones. The nearest fictional counterpart to his portrayal of working-class travails compounded by racist pathology is the wartime black LA of Chester Himes's *If He Hollers Let Him Go*—as opposed to the gritty cartoon Harlem Himes imagined for black cops Coffin Ed Johnson and Grave Digger Jones. Mosley has admitted to Zolaesque ambitions for the Easy series, and he's sometimes Dickensian in his fond eye for how people get by.

But Mosley is more than a social realist in genre disguise. For him, culture is complicated by psychology, especially Easy's. Easy respects everyday lives because he longs for one. He has a highly unsleuthlike domestic side—handy around the house, he loves to prepare simple, tasty food that grows more sophisticated as the series progresses, and he has adopted two children orphaned by early cases. But his love life is troubled by the same inner turmoil and inability to trust that fuels his compulsion to comprehend America's racial maelstrom and morass. With a nod to le Carré's George Smiley, there is no knottier character in pop fiction. Even so, however, Rawlins falls short by the standards of the canonical; he's less complex than Raskolnikov or Hurstwood, Jane Somers or Mr. Biswas. That's one reason he so needs his alter ego, who is my nominee for Mosley's most memorable creation: Raymond Alexander, *a k a* Mouse.

If a character is supposed to have an inner life, Mouse barely qualifies; in the *Bildungsroman Gone Fishin'*, Rawlins calls his best friend "the only man I ever knew who didn't have a heart at all." The slight, natty, gray-eyed, light-skinned, sexually irresistible, murderous Mouse is less a character than a force of culture, an amoral and apparently immortal orisha who's always there at the end to save Easy from his own misreadings, insecurities and equivocations—often by killing people who may not require killing. Mouse doesn't worry about who deserves what because if he did he'd be dead by now. Late in *Devil in a Blue Dress*, he angrily tells Easy to watch out for the white man in him. "You be thinkin' that what's right fo' them is right fo' you.... A nigger ain't never gonna be happy 'less he accept what he is."

Like many black artists, Mosley is of two minds about questions of racial identity. As a committed race man, he's worked with PEN and CUNY to foster black writing and publishing and co-edited the 1999 essay collection *Black Genius*. But he's all too aware that categorizing (to choose an example he's cited himself) Toni Morrison as a black writer is to suggest that she should therefore be judged by looser standards than Doris Lessing or Saul Bellow. And for Mosley, the impossible question of identity has an additional dimension, because Mosley is black only by the one-drop rule of a racist culture. Fact is, Mosley is biracial—his father, who died in 1993, was "black," which here in America almost never means 100 percent African, while his mother is white, Jewish with her share of communist relatives. Here in America, however, biracial equals black, and Mosley knows it. Hence, Mouse. If white America defines Easy as black, then Easy had better accept that Mouse's stereotype informs how he, Easy Rawlins, is perceived. Nor is Mouse merely a caricature of how white America sees blackness—Easy loves Mouse, admires Mouse and identifies with Mouse. And though the memoir material in *What Next* makes clear that Easy is more a projection of the author's father than of the author himself, Mosley clearly shares Easy's feelings.

At around the time Mosley was inventing Mouse, hip-hop cliques nationwide, particularly in LA, were modernizing the Stagger Lee myth through the prism of *Superfly*, *The Mack* and *Scarface*. Collectively, they created that now ubiquitous cultural figure, the gangsta. Though separated by many decades, Mouse and the gangsta are brothers. Their lawless, apolitical "blackness" mocks the meliorist dreams of the talented tenth and its hard-working, well-churched foot soldiers. It gets them just deserts on terms they define. As Mosley puts it: "Raymond was proof that a black man could live by his own rules in America when everyone else denied it." True, even the most self-aware gangstas—Biggie Smalls, Tupac Shakur, Ghostface Killah—have proudly claimed the "reality" of the role, whereas Mouse remains a fictional device so lovingly fleshed out you long for him to reappear so you can watch Mosley put him through his paces. But Mouse is so crucial to the Easy books that it's not altogether clear who's in control—he's like an anima Mosley can't get away from.

In the pivotal *A Little Yellow Dog*, Mouse enters the usual climactic confrontation armed only with a meat cleaver and is fatally shot. Driven to kill off this *deus ex machina* as spirit of the race, Mosley didn't publish another Easy novel for six years. But although Mouse remains dead in the disoriented *Bad Boy Brawly Brown*, he haunts it—Easy can't stop wondering what Raymond would have done, or lacerating himself for his loss. Easy believes that if he hadn't drawn his friend into the mysteries that are a detective's fate, Mouse would still reign as king of the ghetto—admired by men and adored by women, although mellowing a bit because he killed his father and, blessed with a heart after all, feels bad about it.

The Fearless Jones novels of 2001 and 2003 turn on a safer, simpler version of the Easy-Mouse relationship, a dichotomy that recalls such pairings as Rex Stout's housebound Nero Wolfe and athletic Archie Goodwin. The cowardly bookstore owner Paris Minton is a less obsessive detective, with none of Easy's self-searching or violent undercurrent; the scarily intrepid Fearless Jones is a less avid killer, with a chivalrous code of honor. But Mosley couldn't stay away from his anima. For five installments of the deft *Six Easy Pieces*—six stories that originally baited six 2002 Easy reprints plus a new one to bait the collection—Easy tries to relocate a Mouse he can't believe is dead. In each he finds yet another murder instead, with killers who include a white security thug, the neglected teenage son of a crooked Cajun garage owner, an overprotective black mother and Mouse's widow. The sixth story begins with a rapping on the door. Mouse is so well named that 6-foot-2 Easy doesn't realize his friend has returned from the dead till he looks down. How about that? All it took to heal the little man's life-ending injury was the voodoo of Mama Jo, a conjure woman who dates back to *Gone Fishin'*.

Yet the two new Easy books find Mouse in a subdued mood, while Mama Jo emerges as more than a plot device. In *Little Scarlet*, about a redheaded black woman murdered during the Watts uprising, Mouse runs looted goods with a white partner, and Easy survives the big shootout alone; in *Cinnamon Kiss*, about the murder of a radical white lawyer in an Oakland abloom with hippies and interracial love, Mouse fails to lure Easy into an armored-car robbery and instead does the detective a series of favors that require his intelligence and his dangerous reputation but not his deadly force. As ever, Easy needs Mouse alive to feel fully alive. But now he handles the dirty work himself, and in both books Mama Jo, "like an African

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myth come to life in the New World," heals Easy's battered body with potions that "rivalled the medicines most doctors prescribed." African-American artifacts were major plot elements in *The Man in My Basement* and one Fearless Jones novel, and Mama Jo too embodies Mosley's turn from the survivalist cunning of black street knowledge to the visionary wisdom of black history. But note that her remedies "rival" the white man's rather than supplanting them; the premise of *Cinnamon Kiss* is that Easy needs big money to send his critically ill young daughter to a clinic in Switzerland.

Mosley is anything but a separatist. In *Bad Boy Brawly Brown*, Easy disentangles a friend's son from black-nationalist gangsters who call themselves the First Men, and the integration that comes with the civil rights movement excites Mosley's closest scrutiny. After leapfrogging from 1948, the last four Easy novels take place in 1963, 1964, 1965 and 1966. In *Little Scarlet* Easy hunts down a homeless serial killer whose parents passed for white but who turned out too dark-skinned to maintain their cover. And though the bad guys in *Cinnamon Kiss* are Nazi collaborators and their enablers, its racial intricacies are unmappable. The murderer is a white public-interest lawyer with eyes for Easy. The title character is an optimistic, ambitious, sexually pragmatic young African-American woman who by the end is preparing to rise to the top of a New York brokerage, presaging the coming black capitalism in all its expedient hedonism. A black ex-soldier doing penance for the Vietnamese village he destroyed has adopted the little girl who was its sole survivor. And then there's Robert E. Lee, a mean, rich, shady white PI who leaves Easy wondering who's the better man because he can forgive his woman for trying to kill him when Easy can't even live with an infidelity.

Mosley was 13 when he watched his father fight the urge to go out and join the Negroes trashing Watts's crude joke of an infrastructure, and he was a full-fledged adolescent by Summer of Love time—just old enough to fall into the trap of romanticizing his own hopeful youth and the historical hopes it fed off. So though you could say he has gotten hung up savoring the moment when integration became a reality—one twist of *Little Scarlet* is the credibility Easy has gained with the white cops who've dogged him since his first case—you could also say he can't bear what happened next. The Socrates Fortlow books *Always Outnumbered, Always Outgunned* and *Walking the Dog*, their protagonist a repentant murderer back on the streets after twenty-seven years in stir, present today's black LA as a disaster zone where brave souls still carve out lives worth living. Both are winning and satisfying but, relative to the Rawlins novels, slender. As someone who anticipated Zolaesque Rawlins reaching into the present, I wish Mosley would move on. We need Easy's take on the poverty programs, Maulana Ron Karenga, the integration (and Latinization) of LA politics, the crack epidemic, Bill Cosby and O.J. Simpson and Rodney King and Maxine Waters and Suge Knight. I'd also love to meet the little guys Mosley would devise—the unemployed grifters and middle-class aspirants, the thugs and fiends, maybe finally even a few gays. The '60s were something, but excavate them too obsessively and you idealize them in spite of yourself.

One avenue of escape from this trap has been Mosley's "serious" novels, all set in the present. And though the first two take place in or near New York, where Mosley has resided since 1982, *Fortunate Son* returns to LA, as does the new science fiction *The Wave*. Like all of Mosley's ventures into shameless respectability, *Fortunate Son* is too schematic, essentially a fable. It's even more so than *The Man in My Basement*, where Sag Harbor's racial history and narrator Charles Blakey's self-destructive anomie provide welcome content, and *RL's Dream*, a nadir, not least because its romanticized bluesman reflects the same puritanical indifference to contemporary music Mosley deplored in his recent *Nation* essay (apparently somebody forced some hip-hop on him in the meantime). In *Fortunate Son*, Mosley's depiction of the private world the black brother creates in a secluded alley when he's just 6, of his homeless years, and even of his job in a barbecue restaurant counteract the novel's penchant for fantasy, which dictates that the crippled black brother is at key junctures incredibly lucky and the hale white brother is so gifted that nothing is denied him except happiness. Vivid and enticing, that alley sticks in the mind. But the plot sits poorly. Even in the detective novels, a villain like the ruthless favor dealer Kronin Stark would be a bit much. It's too bad Mosley needs him here—and that Stark bears a suspicious resemblance to Anniston Bennet, the man in Charles Blakey's basement. It could even be argued that where Mosley gets truly serious is in his critically neglected science fiction.

Extraordinary villainy and supernatural fantasy have long bubbled beneath the surface in Mosley's work. From the start many plots have hinged on evil in high places, and few detective novelists describe so many dreams. The Fearless Jones and Socrates Fortlow books remain outlets for his old realist faith. But in *Cinnamon Kiss*, both the superrich Nazi and Mama Jo ratchet up his wilder tendencies, and in the sci-fi and the related *47* they take over. The slave plantation of *47* has zero room for anything but brutal, endless, unremitting labor, and in the science fiction—1998's *Blue Light*, 2001's *Futureland* and now *The Wave*—the heroes battle governments whose ruthlessness differs from that of a slave owner only in magnitude and scope. Yet three of the four also encompass extra-planetary energies that feel distinctly religious. In *47* it's a brother from another galaxy called Tall John—John the Conqueroo with fancier technology. In the sci-fi it's variations on a magical wave-force charged with assuring the fate of life throughout the universe. The detective-novel and science-fiction impulses are so antithetical that this notion may alienate Easy fans, and its limitations show in *The Wave*, an ambitious combination of futuristic horror story and mystical fairy tale into which Mosley mixes his recent life project of raising his father from the dead. But *Blue Light* is more substantial. Beginning in the Berkeley of the high '60s, it's an oblique tribute to a hippiedom envisioned as struggling salvation of a multicultural humankind.

Blue Light's battle between extraterrestrial forces is humanized and politicized in the little-noticed *Futureland*, which though clumsier structurally than *Six Easy Pieces* is packed with the indelible images that are the special province of the best science fiction. Where Mosley's other sci-fi is premised on an optimism in which brave men and women prevail over imminent world-death, *Futureland* is a nightmare—a disturbingly recognizable surveillance dystopia where adults indenture themselves to buy their parents medical care, the jobless are banished to underground warrens and justice is dispensed by computers. The longest story begins by describing the nine-hour workday of a "labor nervosa" sufferer in a windowless prod station hundreds of stories off the ground—details all too readily projected from the rationalized drudgery of post-union America. *Futureland* fills in the outlines of Mosley's increasingly grim and detailed political vision, and however Bushlike its setup may seem, it was completed during the presidency of Bill Clinton, whose public enthusiasm for the first Rawlins books made Mosley's career. Although Mosley detests Bush and his world war (see 2003's *What Next*), here the deepest evil is corporate (see 2000's *Workin' on the Chain Gang*). The plot is demonized B-thriller like *The Formula* or *The Net*, but the imagery is

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SPORTS TECH NEWS — 2006

New lure's catch rate may be too high for some tournaments.

Out-fishes other bait 19 to 4 in one contest.

Uses aerospace technology to mimic a real fish.

by Charlie Allen

ORLANDO, FL— A small company in Connecticut has developed a new lure that mimics the motion of a real fish so realistically eight professionals couldn't tell the difference between it and a live shad when it "swam" toward them on retrieval. The design eliminates wobbling, angled swimming and other unnatural motions that problem other hard bait lures. It swims upright and appears to propel itself with its tail.

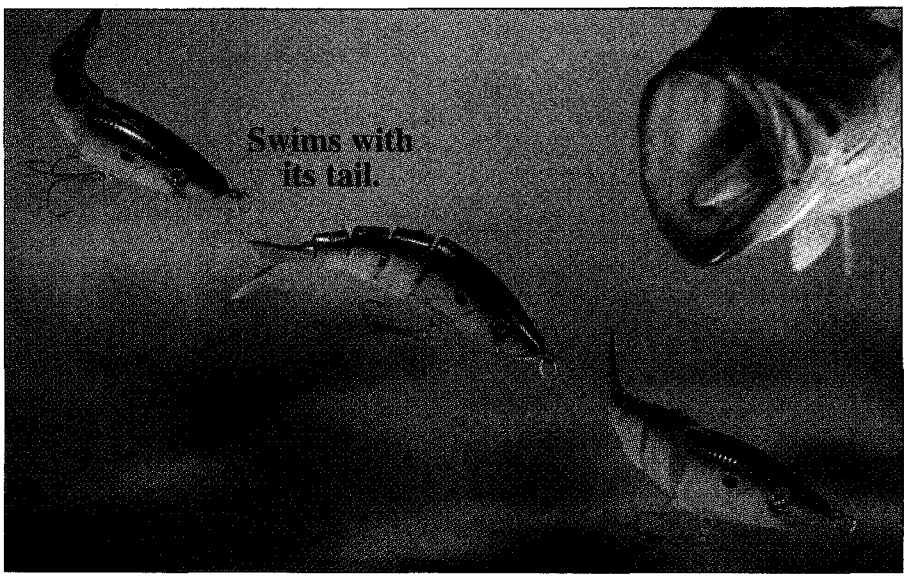
Curiously, the company may have designed it too well. Tournament fishermen who have used it said it's possible officials will not allow it in contests where live bait is prohibited. They claim it swims more realistically than anything they have ever seen. If so, that would hurt the company's promotional efforts. Winning tournaments is an important part of marketing a new lure.

Fish would probably prefer to see it restricted. I watched eight veteran fishermen test the new lure (called The KickTail®) on a lake outside Orlando FL for about four hours. Four used the KickTail and four used a combination of their favorite lures and shiners (live bait). The four using the KickTail caught 41 fish versus 14 for the other four. In one boat the KickTail won 19 to 4. The KickTail also caught bigger fish, which suggests it triggers larger, less aggressive fish to strike. You can see why the company needs to get it into tournaments. An almost 3 to 1 advantage can mean thousands of dollars to a fisherman, and hundreds of thousands in sales to the company.

Inventor Scott Wilson lands a 10-pounder.

The KickTail's magic comes from a patented technology that breaks the tail into five segments. As water rushes by on retrieval, a little-known principle called aeronautical flutter causes the tail to wag left and right, as if the lure were propelling itself with its tail. Unlike other hard baits, the head remains stationary—only the tail wags. A company spokesman told me this.

"Fish attack live things, and they determine if something is alive by watching its movements. Marine biologists will tell you that the more a lure swims like a real fish, the more fish it will catch. Well, the only live thing the KickTail doesn't do is breathe. It's better than live bait! It lasts longer and it never hangs half-dead from a hook. It's always swimming wild and free. Fish can't stand it. We've seen fish that have just eaten go for the KickTail. It's like having another potato chip.



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Whether you fish for fun or profit, if you want a near 3 to 1 advantage, I would order now before the KickTail becomes known. The company even guarantees a refund, if you don't catch more fish and return the lures within 30 days. There are three versions: a floater for top water, a diver and a "dying shad" with a weed guard for fishing lily pads and other feeding spots. The company says it's the only hard bait of its kind in existence. Each lure costs $9.95 and you must order at least two. There is also a "Super 10-Pack" with additional colors for only $79.95, a savings of almost $20.00. S/h is only $6.00 no matter how many you order.

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as vivid as *Blade Runner* or *Soylent Green*. As in most recent Mosley, the good guys come in many colors. But the finale, "The Nig in Me," goes back to what he knows. An international white-supremacist movement develops a virus that will kill everyone of African heritage, but a black scientist reverses the formula—instead, only those at least 12.5 percent African can survive. Having failed to save his white cubicle mate, the black protagonist encounters "three swarthy-looking white men." "Hey, nig!" they shout before shooting at him, and he escapes into the woods. The book ends with a one-sentence paragraph: "The world had started over."

It's a truism that the American detective novel admits existential doubt where the classic British model snaps shut like a jewel box. But recent history has eroded our greatest detective novelist's tolerance for the provisional. That's why he can't extricate his signature character from the '60s, why he dreams godlike interventions. Amid these stratagems, however, Mosley's attachment to social and physical detail continues to ground him. *Blue Light* gets the '60s; *The Wave* evokes LA quasi-bohemia before diving into its mysteries; *Little Scarlet* and *Cinnamon Kiss* satisfy even an Easy fan like me, who—forget Zola—wants the series to turn into Balzac. My own best hope is that Mosley's science fiction will texture cyberpunk on the William Gibson model while his detective fiction grows old with an Easy Rawlins who settles down with his better half. But I suspect Mosley has more in mind for himself than that. ■

East West

MARK MAZOWER

THE TURKS IN WORLD HISTORY.
By Carter Vaughn Findley. Oxford. 300 pp. $21.95.

SONS OF THE CONQUERORS: The Rise of the Turkic World.
By Hugh Pope. Overlook. 413 pp. $35.

Between the world wars, Turkish schoolchildren imbibed a version of their nation's past drawn up under the close supervision of Kemal Atatürk, the Father of the Nation himself. Their four-volume history unambiguously asserted the Turks' central role in the development of world civilization; its maps displayed a fantastic array of bold red lines that snaked outward in all directions from their original home in the Inner Asia heartlands, tracing their peregrinations as far afield as China and Scotland, not to mention the Iberian Peninsula, Morocco, Sudan, India and Java. Had the Turks really left nowhere or nothing untouched? The Hittites were claimed as theirs; so were the Macedonians, Germans, Etruscans—and even for a time the Prophet Muhammad.

Today the Turkish History Thesis looks like another case study in twentieth-century nationalist myth-making, like Himmler's Tibetan Aryans, French Gauls or King Fuad's Pharaonism. Yet there was a truth at its core. As those school maps implied, Anatolia—the home of the Turkish Republic—was just one of the Turks' numerous destinations: But if so, what really was the relationship between modern Turkey and what its intellectuals once called the "Outer Turks" of Central Asia?

Until recently, this was merely a matter of antiquarian interest for most people west of Istanbul. No longer. Last year, London's Royal Academy hosted a blockbuster of a show titled "The Turks: A Journey of a Thousand Years, 600–1600." Beginning on the borders of seventh-century China, with Buddhist cave paintings from Xinjiang, home today to the Turkic Uyghurs, placed next to massive Kyrgyz stone cupbearers from Central Asia, the exhibition offered a magnificent panorama of cultures and demonstrated through carpets, ceramics, carvings and miniatures how Turkic-speaking peoples acted as the intermediaries for a fusion of Chinese, Persian, Arabic and European traditions. The exhibition ended in 1600, at the summit of Ottoman power, as if to suggest that the Ottoman sultans, Europe's own Turks, were where this Eurasian world-historical process reached its culmination. But this display of Ottomania—a craze, currently sweeping Istanbul, that has branded everything from Sufi jazz bands to tourist gift shops—was very much a reflection of the present moment. A new generation of Turks is again knocking at Europe's door, and the show was obviously designed to assert—just as Atatürk's History Thesis did in the 1930s—Turkey's civilizational credentials, in a spirit simultaneously defiant and hopeful.

What the exhibition also underscored is that Europe is not the Turks' only option. Indeed, as the negotiations over European Union membership finally sputtered into life, the country announced the opening of the new billion-dollar oil pipeline from Baku to the Mediterranean, with an equally important gas pipeline not far behind. Turning itself into the hub for the vast fuel reserves of the Caspian basin, it is also looking eastward—to Azerbaijan and the Central Asian republics—and rediscovering its past. Turkish membership is the single most important issue likely to confront the EU over the next decade, and the two books reviewed here provide plenty of help in understanding what this transformation of Turkey's place in the world implies for international affairs. Carter Vaughn Findley's *The Turks in World History* is a panoramic and scholarly survey of the Eurasian *longue durée*, written by a well-respected American historian of the Ottoman Empire; *Sons of the Conquerors* by Hugh Pope, an experienced correspondent who runs the Istanbul bureau for the *Wall Street Journal*, contains incisive political and cultural reportage of the same area over the past decade. Between them, they allow us to explore the complex connection between Turkey and the Turks, and in the process to see more clearly where Europe fits in.

Who is a Turk? worried Turkish nationalists a century ago as the Ottoman Empire's European provinces slipped from the Porte's grasp. To counter Russian pan-Slavism and the weak Ottoman response, some of them came up with a new ideology: pan-Turkism. Their raw material was the hundreds of thousands of refugees who had been forced to make their way into Anatolia from the Caucasus, the Crimea and the Balkans. Racially, socially and linguistically diverse, they mainly shared their faith, and many might well have empathized with Sultan Abdul Hamid II's vision of pan-Islamic solidarity. But after World War I, with the empire on its deathbed and even its Arab provinces lost, religion was not the common denominator to which Atatürk and his fellow republicans would appeal. On the contrary, they abolished the caliphate, dissolved most of the

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Sufi orders and brought the ulema under close control. Seeing in secularism and state supervision of religion the route to modernity, they took their civil code from Switzerland and their criminal law from Italy, and defined belonging in the new Turkish nation-state through language—stripping Ottoman Turkish of its Arabic and Persian accretions, and writing it in the Latin script. Many refugees found themselves and their children learning a new tongue.

New to them, perhaps, but Turkish was and had long been a kind of lingua franca for merchants, political agitators and pilgrims across much of Central Asia and western China. Ironically, however, as the Turkish Republic rose from the ashes of the old empire, the simultaneous triumph of Soviet Communism curtailed such contacts. Atatürk concentrated on preserving Turkish sovereignty in Anatolia itself. And when his rival and former commander, Enver Pasha, died in battle in 1922, hopes of a pan-Turkish uprising against the Bolshevik regime died with him. Its external boundaries patrolled more rigorously than they ever had been by the tsars, the Soviet Union encompassed the Turkic-speaking peoples of Central Asia and cut them off from their neighbors. Later, Chinese Communist rule in Xinjiang had a similarly isolating effect so far as the Uyghurs were concerned. The twentieth century thus marked both the rise of modern Turkey and the fragmentation of a Turkic *oikumene* (homeland) that had existed for more than a millennium.

Among the chief creators of that Turkic Eurasia had been the Mongol khans, whose world empire rested on the twin pillars of Turkish and Islam. In 1401 the historian Ibn Khaldun was brought to meet their last great leader, Tamerlane, outside the walls of Damascus. In his works on world history, the scholar had argued that the key determinant of civilization was the endless cyclical struggle between nomadic and sedentary peoples; one could, he argued, see that process at work among the Arabs in the seventh century, for instance, or in the clash between the Berbers of North Africa and the cities of the Iberian Peninsula. Tamerlane, of course, whose conquests extended from Moscow to Delhi, provided the clearest possible illustration of the military power of a nomadic polity. Although neither of the two men could have known it, as they conversed about history, religion and business, Tamerlane was also its last major representative. In the great Mongol eruption of the early fifteenth century, the first phase of Turkic history ended and a second began. Ibn Khaldun's cycle of history was

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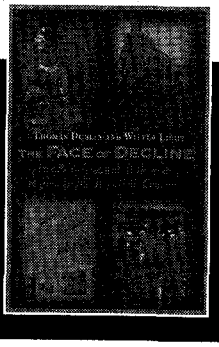

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broken, and the age of Turkic wanderings was replaced by the consolidation of highly organized Turkic empires.

It had all begun, as Findley makes clear in *The Turks in World History*, about eight centuries earlier. Turks were in demand for their military skills, and many became mercenaries in the Arab armies of the Middle East. In the tenth century, they started to settle in significant numbers in Iran and Syria; soon they were pressing upon the borders of Byzantine Anatolia. In 1071 the Seljuk Turks succeeded where Arab armies had failed, and by defeating a Byzantine army at the Battle of Manzikert, they gradually conquered the Anatolian highlands, pushing the zone of Christendom back to the coast. Since these Turkic invaders had adopted Islam, their victory opened Anatolia to Muslim settlement as well. In fact, Islam was the overwhelmingly favored religion of those tribes that moved south and west, though some Turkic tribes adopted Christianity and others Judaism and Buddhism. (One eighth-century Uyghur ruler became Manichean, testimony to the enduring influence of Persian culture.) But religious conversion was only part of the transition from a nomadic, pastoralist, tribal-based polity to a more sedentary urban state. As groups of tribes made this transition, they allied their own military skills with the bureaucratic and administrative techniques of those they conquered—whether Chinese, Persian or Byzantine. Far from destroying the states they overran, in other words, the Turks were in some respects if not conquered then deeply influenced by those they had defeated. The Mamluk rulers of Egypt ended up speaking Arabic; the Moghuls, Persian and later Urdu.

For nomad dynasties, as Ibn Khaldun stressed, the challenge was not so much conquest as managing to hold on to power for more than one or two generations. Turkish settlement in Anatolia did not immediately bring political stability, and the Seljuks themselves were soon pushed aside as the region was carved up among powerful emirs. The family that became known as the Ottomans was one of the lesser of these dynasties, stationed on the northwestern border with the Byzantines. Starting in the early fourteenth century, they pushed westward, taking over Christian lands in Anatolia and then moving to the European shore. Among their allies were disillusioned Byzantine generals, Catholic-hating Orthodox bishops and Balkan princes, while dynastic marriages brought Christian princesses into imperial harems. From the start, therefore, the Ottoman state was associated, to an extent unmatched by any other Turkic polity, with the world of Eastern Christendom. Even if we do not go as far as the Romanian historian Nicolae Iorga, who claimed that the Ottoman Empire was a kind of "Byzantium after Byzantium," it certainly owed much to its predecessor. Following the conquest of Constantinople, Sultan Mehmed's proud claim to be the emperor of the Romans reflected this European orientation.

Tamerlane had nearly put an end to the Ottomans' dizzying ascent to world power. Shortly after his meeting with Ibn Khaldun, his Turkic-speaking Mongol army inflicted the worst defeat in Ottoman history, plunging the empire into a two-decade succession crisis. When the empire re-emerged, it was into a very different era. Gunpowder now gave the upper hand to highly organized imperial polities and doomed nomadic dynasties like Tamerlane's that were unable to adjust. As his successors argued among themselves, the steppe peoples lost their lethality and fell under the control of the empires of Russia and China; the last to go were the picturesque khanates of Bukhara and Khiva in the mid-nineteenth century. Where Turkic states survived, it was because they made the transition to a different form of imperial government—in the

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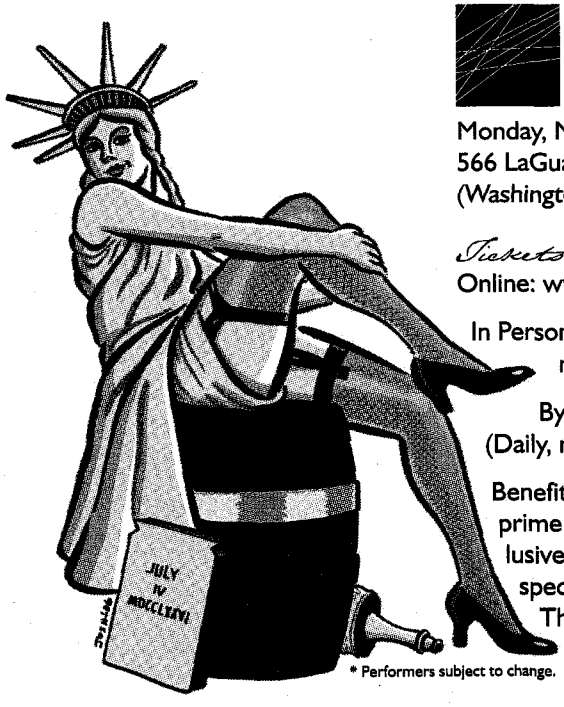

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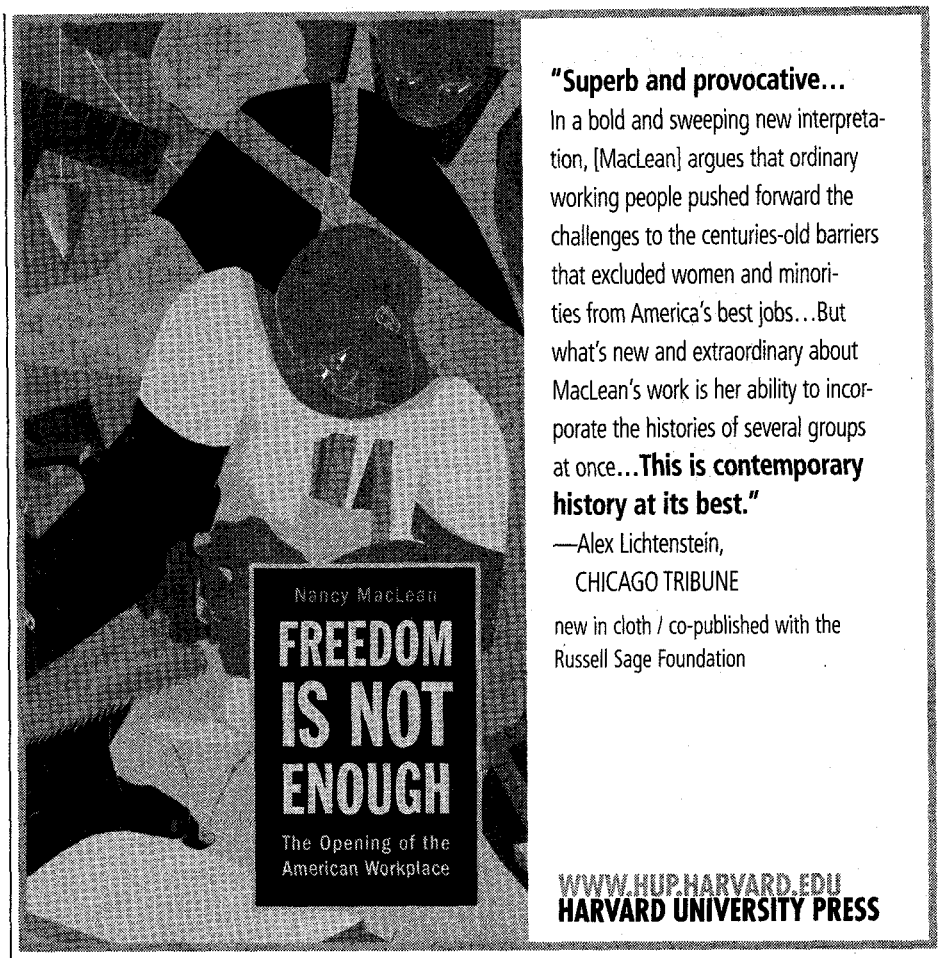
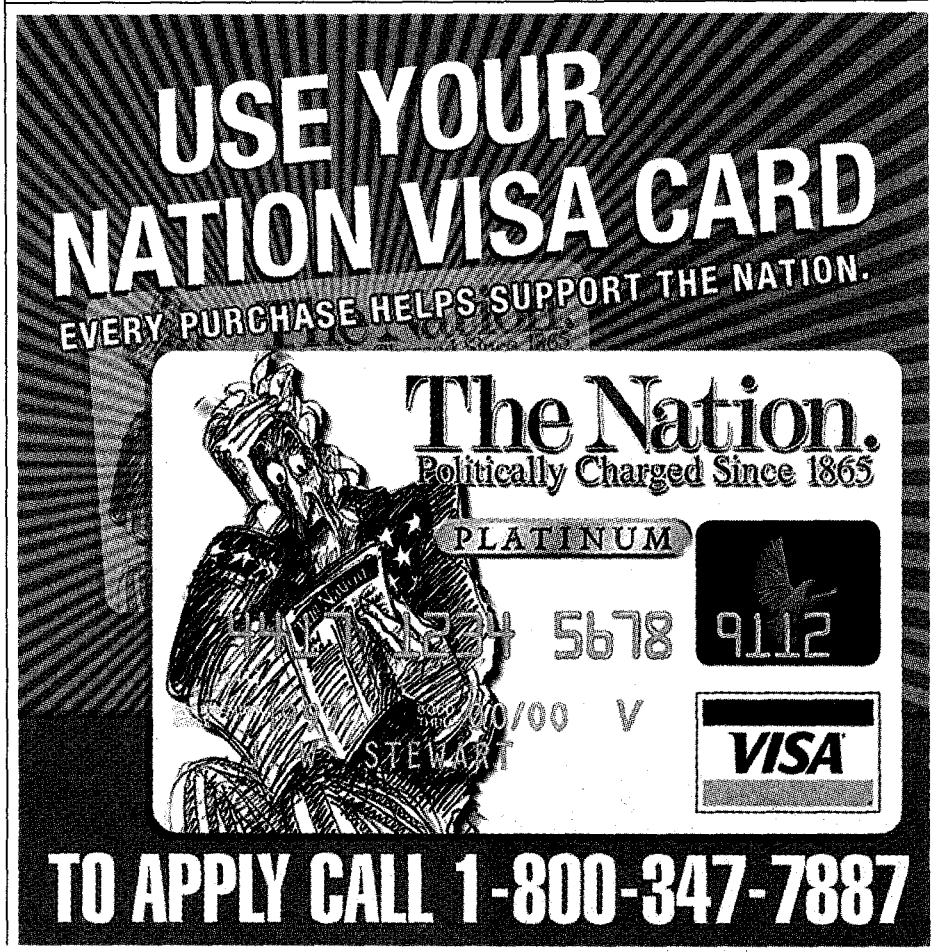
Ottoman lands but also in Safavid Persia and Moghul India.

Findley's lucid exposition mines a rich vein of historical comparison. Although all three dynasties were of Turkic origin, only under the Ottomans were Turkish speakers sufficiently numerous to preserve their tongue as the linguistic foundation of the empire. The fate of Islam in the three empires was very different too: In India, the Moghuls quickly stretched the letter of the religious law in order to come to terms with a predominantly Hindu population; in Safavid Persia, at the other extreme, the dynasty forced Twelver Shiism upon the largely Sunni population. The Ottomans, who conquered Syria, Egypt and the holy places of the Hijaz as their Safavid rivals seized power to their east, reacted by emphasizing the Sunni character of the state and claimed the caliphate for further legitimacy. Of these three dominant powers of southern Eurasia, the Ottomans were the oldest and most successful, easily outlasting the others before finally succumbing in the aftermath of World War I.

Findley leaves no doubt as to the massive impact of Turkic tribes on the history of Eurasia, whether in the earlier phase of nomadic raiding empires or in the later transition to settled dynastic and bureaucratic states. But what—aside from language—did the Turks have in common? Sometimes it seems as if both authors are searching for a set of special racial characteristics of one kind or another. Pope talks a trifle unnervingly about "a universal Turkic look," a certain recognizable physical type, and he even suggests, buying perhaps a little too readily into the mythology of the Atatürkist military, that the Turks have a special genius for war. For his part, Findley sees a metaphorical carpet being woven on the loom of Turkish historical experience, binding the Turkic world together. But does it really hold? A language of quasi-racial unity that would be shouted down if applied to any European people—who spends much time pondering the unity of the Slavs?—still, it seems, holds an appeal for Turkish specialists.

Not surprisingly, given today's obsessions, another way of identifying what makes the Turks special involves highlighting their attitude to Islam. Both Pope and Findley, like other contemporary commentators, want to suggest that there is a Turkic form of Islam, more flexible, tolerant and adaptable to the modern world than its Arab counterparts. They see the roots of this in Central Asian shamanism, Mongol religious syncretism and Sufi tra-





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ditions, and find its political expression in Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan and the AKP, his moderate Islamist Justice and Development Party. To my ears this explanation is unconvincing. If we are interested in the differences between Turkey and the rest of the Middle East, it is probably neither necessary nor accurate to talk in terms of some benign syncretism—as though external influences are required to drain an essentially belligerent faith of its venom. Such an approach involves a question-begging definition of what Islam "really" is. History and politics are surely more relevant. By preserving Turkish independence and preventing Anatolia from being carved up after 1918, Atatürk marked Turkey out from the less fortunate Arab provinces to the south and gave his successors a unique legacy in the Middle East and fewer grievances vis-à-vis the West. More recently too, as Pope observes, the Turkish regimes and states of the post–cold war era have found that unlike the Arabs, their interests have largely coincided with the policies of the United States. As so often, what we pose as a question of religion is really a matter of geopolitical fortunes.

The truth is that religious and linguistic kinship binds Turks together about as much as it does the Slavs, which is to say not at all. Pope's adventures around the Turkic world chart its—and his—gradual disenchantment with the vision of a common cultural and political space that briefly seized hold of Turkish politicians after the collapse of the Soviet Union. For a moment, the end of the cold war made it look as though the legacies of Atatürk and Enver could be combined. In the early 1990s, President Ozal tried to persuade the rulers of the newly independent Central Asian republics of the benefits of Turkey's hegemony. But their new political elites were keen to enjoy their newfound freedom. They wanted Turkish know-how and capital; the Azeris wanted Turkish arms in Nagorno-Karabakh. But none wanted to sacrifice independence for a pan-Turkish dream. Since 1993 the pan-Turkish summits have gone nowhere. The Eastern option, driven as late as 1997 from Ankara after the humiliation of being rebuffed for early membership by Brussels, now looks moribund.

In a sequence of superbly reported episodes, Pope explains why. New despots rule most of the Central Asian republics with an iron hand and try to buy off the populace with the proceeds of oil, gas and mineral exploitation. Meanwhile, the legacy of Soviet-era pollution and ecological devastation continues to haunt the region. Despite its vast natural wealth, Azerbaijan has been unable to reconquer Nagorno-Karabakh from the equally impoverished Armenians—so much for Turkic military prowess. Turkey itself keeps aloof, providing the Azeris with a lesson in the difference between the rhetoric of racial solidarity and the reality of national interest; Pope describes an Enver Pasha garage that stands forlornly on the way to Moscow Prospekt. As a result, the prospect of Moscow, weakened beyond what anyone could have imagined in 1989, is paradoxically less frightening to the Central Asian republics: After a lot of talk about introducing the Latin alphabet, Cyrillic still rules.

If Pope's picture of the stagnation of life in Central Asia is deeply depressing, Turkey itself seems to be a country transformed. Starting with the economic liberalization of the 1980s and accelerating with the move toward Europe in the past decade, the country appears galvanized by new energy. Pope hails the provincial entrepreneurs whose goods are Turkey's chief influence eastward and a powerful reason why Turkey still outweighs Iran as a regional power. This group underpins the rise of Prime Minister Erdogan's AKP and shows, he argues, the compatibility of Islam with capitalism and democracy. Meanwhile, the old state apparatus fights anything more than cosmetic change: At the Aydin police station—whose chief is an honorary mayor of Baton Rouge—they are playing Leonard Cohen through the public address system, but Pope is still kept away from the antiterrorist cells.

And what of Europe, accustomed for so long to see itself as the Turks' opposite? The historical irony that leaps out of Findley's invigorating survey in particular is that the inhabitants of present-day Turkey and of its predecessor, the Ottoman Empire, were and are in fact the most Europeanized of the Turks, as deeply marked by their proximity to Christendom as Khublai Khan was by China. Indeed, today's second-generation Turkish immigrants in Germany and the Netherlands, interviewed by Pope, feel more at home there than in Anatolia. They have no difficulty accommodating their religious views—in fact, they find the atmosphere freer in some ways than it was back home, and as the generations pass, the clash between village ways and the new habits of urban life is attenuated. There are thus many reasons to welcome the EU's recent decision to open negotiations with Turkey. But as Austria's resistance to this suggests, old stereotypes die hard: It is not only the Turkish History Thesis that needs revision. ■

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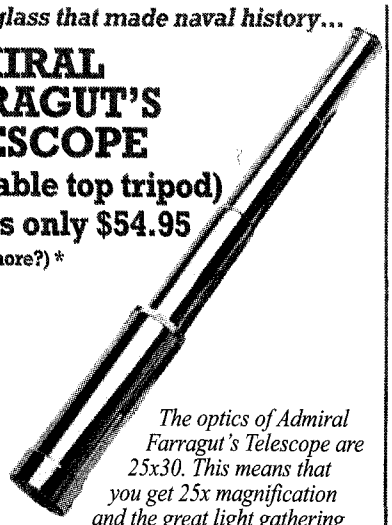

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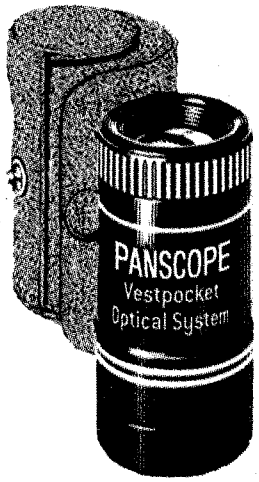

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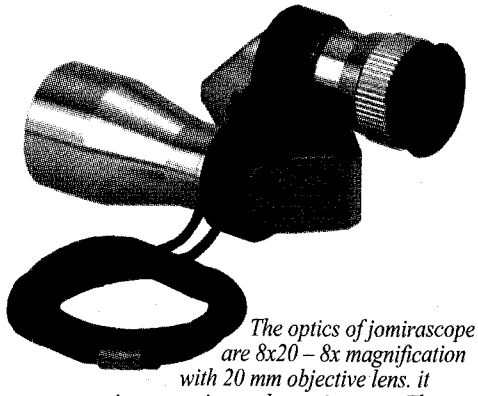

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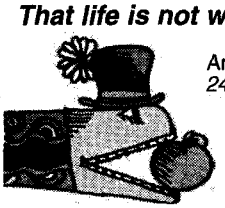

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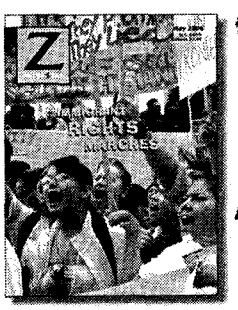

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FILMS

Night on Earth

STUART KLAWANS

THE DEATH OF MR. LAZARESCU • THE NOTORIOUS BETTIE PAGE • SIR! NO SIR!

Honey, let's go see that three-hour Romanian movie, about the sick old man who's lying on a gurney! Oh, you mean the new Ion Fiscuteanu picture—the one where he spits up, mumbles and falls asleep? Sure, darling, but we'd better buy our tickets online. *The Death of Mr. Lazarescu* is going to sell out!

May it be so—because however drab and draggy it may sound in synopsis, *The Death of Mr. Lazarescu* is a great movie.

Granted, it really is a three-hour ride with a dying man, portentously named Dante Remus Lazarescu: a 62-year-old engineer (played by the grizzled and blubbery Fiscuteanu) who is trucked this way and that through the Bucharest night, leaking confused words and bodily wastes at a series of unhelpful hospitals. You might say the film proceeds by subtraction. It progressively takes away Lazarescu's energy, mobility, command of language, control of bowels, tongue, clothes, hair and autonomy, until the complete man you saw at the beginning—pained and panting but still furnished with a home, habits, neighbors, family and sarcasm—is reduced to a slab of flesh under a sheet.

But *The Death of Mr. Lazarescu* also proceeds by addition, which perhaps explains one small part of its greatness. While Lazarescu is descending on his nighttime journey toward zero, the film builds up an entire social world around him—one that is harrowing, funny, infuriating, outrageous and sometimes profoundly moving.

The pileup begins in a hideaway typical of an aging widower: dirty dishes clustered next to the sink, towers of old newspapers stacked in the living room, voices yammering incessantly on TV and cats sprawled on every stick of furniture. Lazarescu doesn't live in this apartment so much as wear it, like his snug knit cap or polo shirt. You can sense the space clinging to him, permeated by his humidity and odor. Except for the cats (which seem to multiply every time the camera turns in a new direction), he is on his own—alone and waiting. Complaining of a persistent headache and vomiting, he has phoned for an ambulance; and while his request is going unanswered, minute after minute, there's nothing for him to do but pour a drink of some nasty caramel-colored stuff, rub his stomach, call the ambulance service again, take some medicine, grouse to the cats, put on a fresh polo shirt (he's vomited on the old one) and call his married sister to argue (with a certain eloquence, an intellectual keenness) about money. The light is dull and waxy, even in the kitchen. When Lazarescu settles down for any length of time, halting the handheld camera in its wanderings, the image trembles slightly, as if palsied.

You and Lazarescu are allowed to steep in this woozy isolation until the director and co-writer, Cristi Puiu, is good and ready to introduce other people—starting with a big, booming neighbor and his pincushion wife. When interrupted by Lazarescu, who has ventured across the landing to ask for help, these two exemplars of the philosophy that "Life goes on!" scarcely bother to listen to the sick man or look closely at him, so intent are they on continuing their chronic warfare over his head—also around him, and in front. While his legs suddenly turn to water and the lights on the landing keep blinking off, the neighbors interrupt their self-absorption only to admonish Lazarescu about his drinking, or to offer a little pork moussaka (just the thing for someone who can't keep down an aspirin). Monsters of comic invention, these Bickersons would be enough in themselves to kill off poor Lazarescu, except that the paramedic finally enters, with a worried frown at all she sees.

This is Mioara (Luminita Gheorghiu), the film's other central character, who will soon take Lazarescu on a ride that unexpectedly lasts all night—or into eternity, if you prefer. A compact, middle-aged woman, redheaded and down at the mouth, she conforms at first to the film's pattern by ignoring Lazarescu. It's a routine, the practice of which, I believe, is not confined to Bucharest: When a slovenly, reeking old guy complains of vague ills, you excuse yourself as soon as possible. Yet some urging of professional pride—or some remark dropped by Lazarescu, who at this stage remains voluble—prods Mioara awake, to

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do more than treat Lazarescu symptomatically for alcoholism. She examines him and realizes he needs attention.

For the remaining two hours of the movie, attention is exactly what he won't get.

Between 10 o'clock on Saturday night and dawn on Sunday, Mioara carts her patient to four hospitals, each of which has its own atmosphere, rhythm and manners, and its own way of dismissing Lazarescu. At the trauma center, everyone orbits warily about a tall, rail-like doctor with the beard of Abe Lincoln and the attitude of an aggrieved prophet. He condemns Lazarescu on sight as a worthless drunk and excoriates Mioara as an idiot for having brought him into the emergency room; then, almost as an afterthought, the doctor writes an order for Lazarescu to get a CAT scan, at a different hospital.

On to the brighter, more modern University Hospital, where the usual insults soon give way to collegial interplay and gallows humor, carried out over Lazarescu's supine form. The neurologist, who tramps around in a belted red nightgown, flirts with the ER doctor. The radiologist, biting snappily into his chewing gum, issues a continual stream of grim wisecracks, among which is a fatal judgment on Lazarescu.

At the next stop, a harsh and shadowless hospital for neurosurgery, the doctors are interested only in themselves. Mioara is of insufficient rank to be allowed to speak to them and must be so informed, loudly and repeatedly. As for Lazarescu, he figures to these doctors as a hairy, obese procedural inconvenience, who is therefore to be disposed of procedurally. Just before daybreak, Mioara delivers her charge to the final hospital: an anteroom, you'd think, either to the next life or to nothingness, deserted, echoing, dimly lit, staffed by women doctors who speak in dreamy murmurs.

So *The Death of Mr. Lazarescu* arrives at last at a place of exhaustion and quiet, where the human animal is revealed in its bare material essence: a place of mystery. Every moment along the way has been vivid and convincing; every interaction, emotionally charged. And the deepest, most sustained of these interactions—the last relationship Lazarescu will ever have—turns out to be with Mioara.

At first, when he is still talking, she lets him converse with her only grudgingly, killing time on the road to the trauma center. She just wants someone to take him off her hands. But the more the doctors push her around, the more she pushes back, claiming this case as her own. The more Lazarescu weakens, losing contact with the world around him, the stronger grows Mioara's emotional bond with him. At the climax, in the neurologists' hospital, she rises to a level of heroic defiance against the doctors and their arrogance—while Lazarescu summons the last strength of his life to make a grand refusal, not only for himself but also, I suspect, for her.

Co-written with Razvan Radulescu, *The Death of Mr. Lazarescu* is the second feature to be directed by the 39-year-old Puiu, and the first in his projected six-film series on aspects of love, inspired by Eric Rohmer's *Six Moral Tales*. After winning a prize at the 2005 Cannes Festival (despite a reported defection at the press screening of all but a dozen viewers), *The Death of Mr. Lazarescu* provided last fall's New York Film Festival with a peak experience and is now opening for a theatrical run at New York's Film Forum, billed as a comedy.

It *is* funny, sometimes. But what really makes me throw back my head and laugh is not the film itself but the joy of seeing this magnificent picture now playing in a movie house.

The world's first feminist pro-porn speculative biopic—that's hard to say, with false teeth—*The Notorious Bettie Page* poses Gretchen Mol fetchingly in a large collection of swimsuits, lingerie, black fetishwear and nothing at all, on the pretext of teasing out some insight into 1950s America and one of its most popular pin-up models. Since I didn't mind seeing Mol

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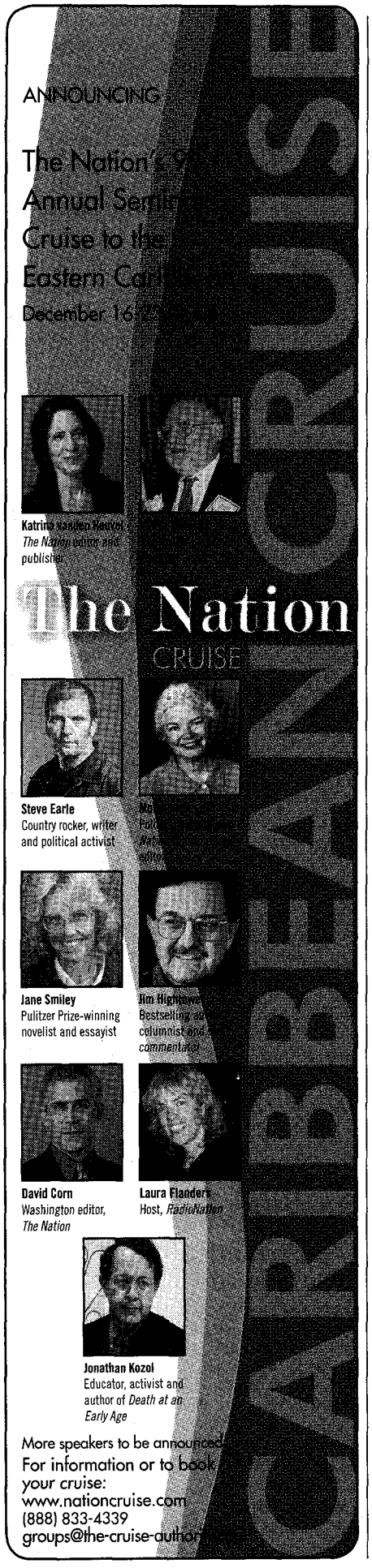

tritz around in swimsuits, etc., and since Lily Taylor and Chris Bauer have such fun playing the nice, homey smut dealers who employed Bettie, I've got very little to complain about. Then again: Bettie's character, as confected here, is a deliberately thin and poorly stirred mixture, compounded of one part psychosocial cliché (the abused girl who becomes sexually demonstrative), one part stereotype (the simple Jesus-loving Southerner) and one part surrogate (Mol, playing to the camera to show that Bettie did, too). You might think this slapdash approach to character is sophisticated, in its post-whatever insouciance. I think it's half-assed, three different ways. As for social commentary, the filmmakers seem to have felt they'd done all that was necessary by making the second 1950s-period feature to show a black-and-white David Strathairn orating into a microphone. The film was directed by Mary Harron (*I Shot Andy Warhol*, *American Psycho*) from a screenplay she wrote with Guinevere Turner (*Go Fish*). In the past, these two did substantial work. Now they play, so that audiences may have the double pleasure of enjoying their porn while feeling superior to it.

David Zeiger's documentary feature *Sir! No Sir!* might be described as a therapeutic film, since it seeks to cure some small part of America's amnesia. The experience that's been forgotten—repressed, rather—is that of the Vietnam soldiers' antiwar movement, which spread and intensified throughout the 1960s. Zeiger's method for restoring the memory of this movement, appropriately enough, is to assemble an astonishing collage of archival material, then bring it up to date by interviewing many of the protesters and resisters you see in the old footage. I don't have space to give the entire honor roll, but you should know that it encompasses female and male, enlisted troops and officers, black, white and Puerto Rican, in every branch of the military. Perhaps Zeiger incorporates one too many snippets of Jane Fonda; and maybe, in his enthusiasm for the GI movement, he ultimately overstates its impact, when he gives the impression that a full-scale mutiny was brewing by the early 1970s. (I recall encountering plenty of veterans who hated what they'd been through but also hated the Vietnamese and the antiwar movement.) But enough quibbles. This would have been an important film just by virtue of existing. The way Zeiger has made *Sir! No Sir!*, it's outstanding. *Sir! No Sir!* has just begun a theatrical run at New York's IFC Center and will open in Los Angeles on May 5 at Laemmle's Monica 4. ■

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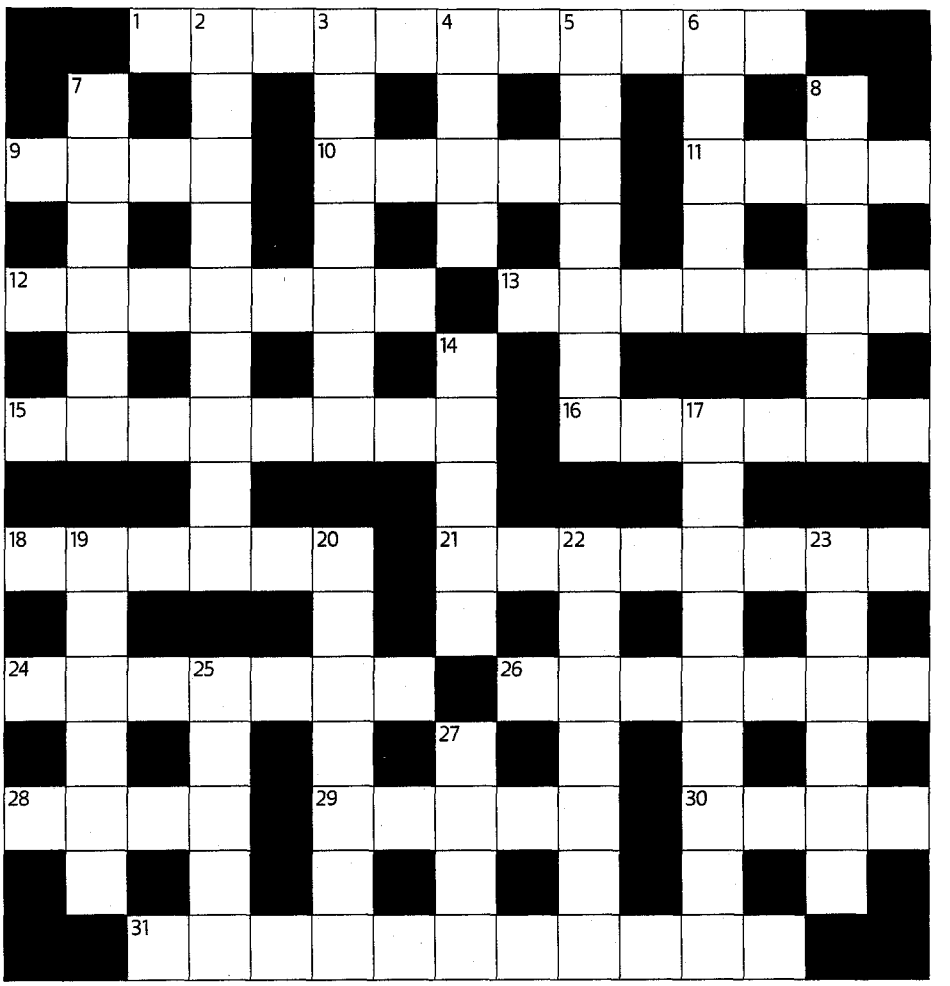

ACROSS

1 Not necessarily a man with a lot of cattle or horses, but he hopes to take some interest in what he has. (11)

9 and **10** The good Senator McCarthy goes to the gathering, in the usual sense. (9)

11 It's not good to exist the wrong way. (4)

12 A good place to watch the action, and spar with what could be the "eats" served. (3,4)

13 Such as Lafitte, with a rather crude attitude, one hears. (7)

15 Not amateur records, but they give short descriptions of people—all viewing aside. (8)

16 Pole might have this, when it's good for a drink. (6)

18 Small growths that show what the weasel does around what is only half finished. (6)

21 Branching like a tree, like a sci-fi creature after study. (8)

24 Being against a little work with what the model did. (7)

26 See 4 down

28 and **29** Thackeray was only middlingly so, as a sign of the antiwar movement. (9)

30 Note makes this pitch. (4)

31 A rather unfair way of throwing a softball. (11)

DOWN

2 Set incorrectly a couple of times to take to the air, but one doesn't want a bit of it. (6,3)

3 Cut short the end of Fido, if he is far from registered. (7)

4 and **26** across If one doesn't want to carry someone else's burden, one still might cope. (4,4,3)

5 Quits making sacks. (4,3)

6 Makes level odds—quite the opposite! (5)

7 What one sometimes has to make when routed incorrectly. (6)

8 The women's movement ends with what the bride and groom say, as a purely personal component. (6)

14 The wrong ideas should not be intended for the audience. (5)

17 and **25** How Columbus sailed overseas. (A cache stores no confusion!) (6,3,5)

19 With no mom or pop, ran with a hop, perhaps. (6)

20 It's an uphill progression with the French, where the bell rang out. (7)

22 The girl seems pretty sharp finally, which should be material. (7)

23 What appears as 10 with a swan swimming for those from Keokuk. (6)

25 See 17

27 A place in England at one time associated with Saturday night. (4)

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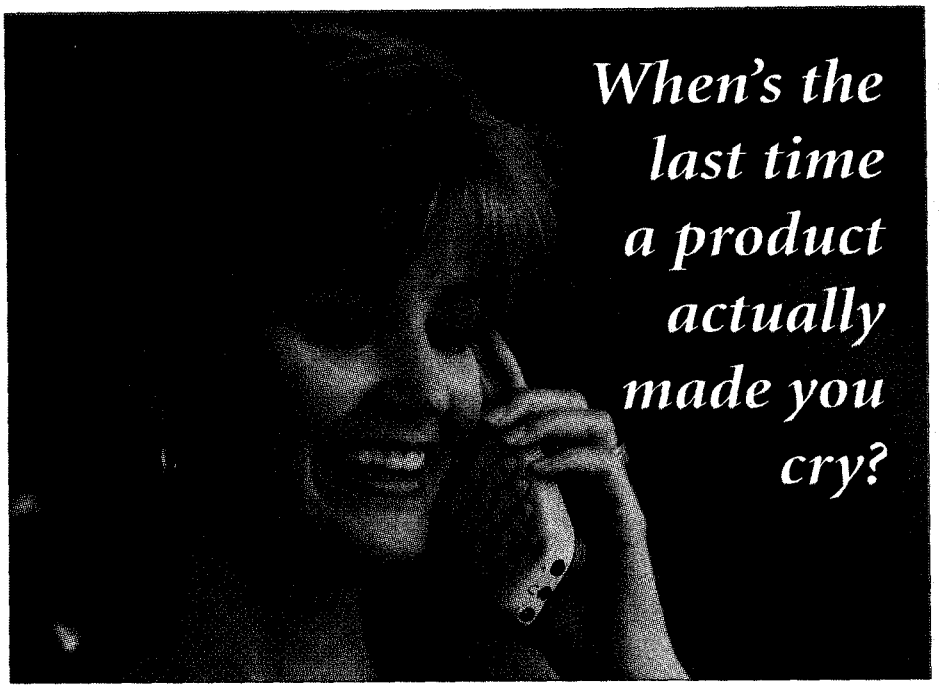

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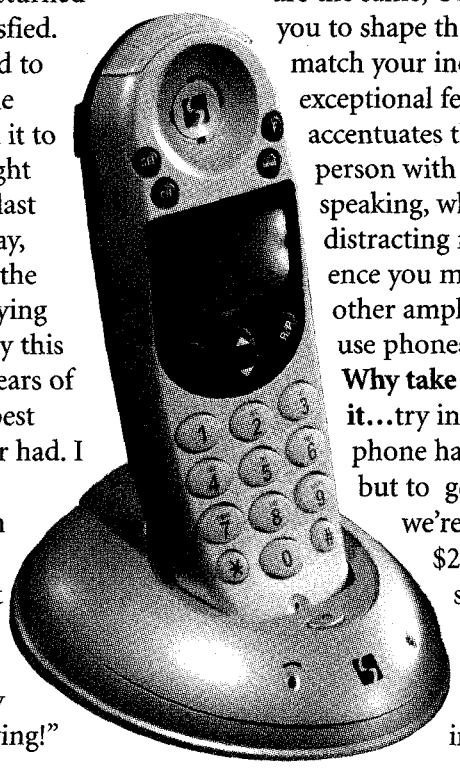

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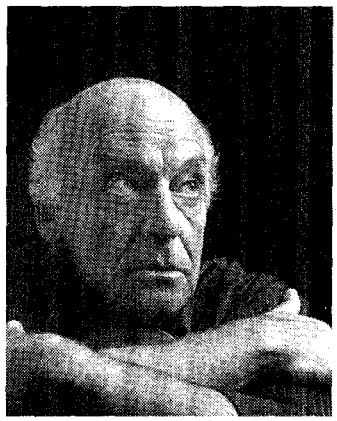

EDUARDO GALEANO is the author of *Voices of Time: A Life in Stories* (Metropolitan Books, 2006). He lives in Montevideo, Uruguay.

ARUNDHATI ROY is the author of *The God of Small Things* (Harper Perennial). She lives in New Delhi, India.

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